

Discerning New Evangelicalism

Lesson Five

Balaamism: The New Evangelical Failure in Ecclesiastical Separation

“¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans: which thing I hate” (Revelation 2:14-15).

In the early church, there were already those who held to the “doctrine of Balaam.” This “doctrine” is detailed in the Old Testament in Numbers 22:5 through 23:24. Balaam was a prophet of God. He is the typical hireling prophet. The Bible has much to say about Balaam. Mainly, the “doctrine of Balaam” was integrating paganism with Christianity. In II Peter 2:15 God speaks of “the way of Balaam.”

“Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the son of Bosor*, who loved the wages of unrighteousness” (II Peter 2:15).

The “way of Balaam” was that he was a spiritual opportunist. He saw fame and fortune from his position as a prophet of God. He traded his God given gift for power and position in the world. He made merchandise of both his ministry and the people God called him to serve. The “way of Balaam” is the person who views people as the means to advance himself and build himself a *kingdom*. The “way of Balaam” is similar to the *Purpose Driven* ministries of New Evangelicalism (meaning GATHERING CROWDS). Pastors who take this avenue for personal success are not Christ’s Under Shepherds.

“¹¹ I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. ¹² But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. ¹³ The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep” (John 10:11-13).

“And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (II Peter 2:3).

The Bible also speaks of the “error of Balaam.”

“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 Korah” (Jude 1:11).

The “error of Balaam” is the “way of Cain.” The “error of Balaam” is primarily the error in thinking that any way (methodology) is acceptable to God as long as it get RESULTS (pragmatism). The “error of Balaam” is the false thinking of the corrupted prophet who believes he exists to be served rather than to serve. The corrupted prophet uses his position for self-glorification, rather than God-glorification. He wants to be exalted before men, rather than exalt God before men and edify men before God.

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart *is* not with thee” (Proverbs 23:7).

These two philosophies of ministry are called the “doctrine of Balaam” by Christ in Revelation 2:14. The Christian is called to preach the doctrine of Christ. In other words we are to seek to reproduce Christ in others by “renewing” their minds and allowing the Holy Spirit to “transform” their lives from the inside out. A man reproduces what he is. He is what he believes. The “doctrine of Balaam” reproduces what Balaam was. Balaamism uses and distorts the Scriptures to get the RESULTS Balaam wanted. It is an insidious kind of corruption. It is New Evangelicalism.

Balaam taught the Moabite king Balak how to corrupt God's children by breaching the walls of their separation from the world. King Balak wanted Balaam to curse the Israelites so that they wouldn't occupy his land, but Balaam could not. He wanted to, but he could not. So Balaam taught king Balak what he needed to do to seduce the children of Israel into compromise in order that God would chastise Israel, rather than bless them. The "doctrine of Balaam" was that he taught the men of Israel to marry Moabite women and defile their separation unto God. This is exactly what New Evangelicalism has done. Paul had a similar problem with the believers at Corinth and so admonishes them.

¹¹ O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. ¹² Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. ¹³ Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged. ¹⁴ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. ¹ Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Corinthians 6:11-7:1).

As a result of Balaam's doctrine (and the similar problem at Corinth), God's children became involved in pagan worship and the fornication of Baalism. New Evangelicalism always begins with toleration and ends with a rapid slide into false practice. Whatever you begin to fix your eyes on will eventually become what you practice. Take separation away from Christianity and you have Balaamism (New Evangelicalism).

"Historic fundamentalism is the literal interpretation of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-biblical affirmations and attitudes" (George Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, 1973).

"The essence of fundamentalism . . . is the unqualified acceptance of and obedience to the Scriptures. . . The present study reveals that pre-1930 fundamentalism was nonconformist, while post-1930 fundamentalism has been separatist" (David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850*, Bob Jones University Press, 1986, p. 5).

"Fundamentalism is the militant belief and proclamation of the basic doctrines of Christianity leading to a Scriptural separation from those who reject them" (John Ashbrook, *Axioms of Separation*, nd., p. 10).

"A fundamentalist is a born-again believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who:

1. Maintains an immovable allegiance to the inerrant, infallible, and verbally inspired Bible.
2. Believes that whatever the Bible says is so.
3. Judges all things by the Bible and is judged only by the Bible.
4. Affirms the foundational truths of the historic Christian Faith: The doctrine of the Trinity; the incarnation, virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection and glorious ascension, and Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; the new birth through regeneration by the Holy Spirit; the resurrection of the saints to life eternal; the resurrection of the ungodly to final judgment and eternal death; the fellowship of the saints, who are the body of Christ.
5. Practices fidelity to that Faith and endeavors to preach it to every creature.
6. Exposes and separates from all ecclesiastical denial of that Faith, compromise with error, and apostasy from the Truth.
7. Earnestly contends for the Faith once delivered."

(World Congress of Fundamentalists, which met in 1976 in Usher Hall, Edinburgh, Scotland)

A central historical Biblical example of the results of the failure of God's people in ecclesiastical separation is found in the account of the prophet Balaam who, for want of power and position, was used to deceive the children of Israel into marriages with the Moabites. Balaam is the typical opportunist prophet whose calling of God was viewed as a means to advance his own agenda. His account is recorded in Numbers 22 through 26.

Essentially what happened was that king Balak (22:2) saw the victories of Israel over other nations around him. Israel was now in his land and preparing to occupy it. So he sent for Balaam (22:5) who was a prophet of God (although not doctrinally sound). Apparently Balaam had a history of "cursing" the enemies of certain kings for them, at a price (22:6). "God came unto Balaam" (22:9) and asked him what he was doing with these men of Moab. Balaam told the LORD what was being requested of him and God told him that Israel was "blessed" (22:12) and therefore Balaam could not pronounce a curse upon them.

But king Balak persisted in trying to persuade Balaam into cursing Israel for him (22:15-17). Apparently there was a great amount of money at stake (22:18) and Balaam wanted it badly. God told Balaam if the men came for him again, to go with them and wait for the Lord to tell him what to do (22:20). But Balaam, in his greed, didn't wait for the men to come back. He got up and went on his own (22:21). He would not listen to the Lord and God had to finally have his jackass speak to him (22:22-34).

To make a long story short, Balaam knew that the power of God could only be upon the nation of Israel if they remained separated unto Him. So taught king Balak what to do to lead them into an association that would cause God to curse them.

"Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD" (Numbers 31:16).

The Word of God tells us that Balak used this information to deceive the congregation of Israel into remaining where they were and then sent the women of Moab out to seduce the men of Israel. New Evangelicalism is a seduction. It BEGINS with seducing people to abandon the doctrine of separation. As we can see by the historical example that God gives us in this text, disobedience in separation is never satiated and will always lead the sinner to greater depths of degradation (you always fall in the direction you lean). What can we learn from Israel's failure in allowing themselves to be seduced away from obedience to God by their failure in ecclesiastical separation?

"And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel" (Numbers 25:1-3).

The wickedness and perversion revealed in the above three verses that Israel was seduced into is a depth of degradation I would not even want to discuss in any detail. In fact, the Word of God tells us that it is shameful even to mention the details of this kind of perverseness. In other words, the very mention of these kinds of things ought to cause the Christian to blush in shame.

⁵ For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. ⁷ Be not ye therefore partakers with them. ⁸ For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) ¹⁰ Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*. ¹² For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret" (Ephesians 5:5-12).

God's response to those who failed in separation was severe.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor” (Numbers 25:4-5).

In the next few verses we find the account of a representative of the government of Israel, a priest, acting as a disciplinarian. It is the individual Christian's responsibility to act upon sin and deal with it. Every Believer/Priest of God is responsible for keeping the congregation of his local church pure and separate from sin and worldliness before God.

“And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel [a death sentence required two or more witnesses of the act], who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly, so the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand” (Numbers 25:6-9).

Phinehas' zeal for God saved Israel from God's wrath. His love of God and God's holiness was the center of his concern. God blessed Phinehas for his action.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy” (Numbers 25:10-11).

True Christians, with an understanding of the spiritual dynamic of maintaining “fellowship” with God, also understand the serious consequences of the loss of God's blessing on individuals and corporately upon a local church when that “fellowship is breached by disobedience of any individual. Individuals in the Church Age do not have the authority for capital punishment as did Phinehas, but we are commanded practice Church Discipline, which may end with the same end results.

“¹ It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. ² And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. ³ For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed, ⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵ To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? ⁷ Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: ⁸ Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth. ⁹ I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: ¹⁰ Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. ¹¹ But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. ¹² For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? ¹³ But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (I Corinthians 5:1-13).

Discerning New Evangelicalism

Lesson Five

Balaamism: The New Evangelical Failure in Ecclesiastical Separation

1. Define the following two things regarding Balaam and discuss how they define the “doctrine of Balaam” referred to in Revelation 2:14-15.

A. The “way of Balaam” (II Peter 2:15) _____

B. The “error of Balaam” (Jude 1:11) _____

2. In what way does the “doctrine of Balaam” define New Evangelicalism? _____

3. Read II Corinthians 6:11-7:1. How was the problem at Corinth that Paul addresses in this text similar to the “doctrine of Balaam”? - _____

4. Four quotes from four different sources are given in this chapter. List some of the essentials to the definition of Biblical Christianity (historical Fundamentalism). _____

5. Detail the events of Balaam’s account from Numbers chapter 22 through 26 and how these events parallel practices common to the *Church Growth* movement of today. _____

6. Read Ephesians 5:5-12. The vast majority of Christians live with little difference between them and the practices of the world. Perversion has become a source of entertainment for them. Discuss the attitude that Christians ought to have regarding the perversions practiced in the world. _____

7. Read Numbers 25:4-5. Discuss why God needed to deal with the issue of sin that resulted from Israel’s lack of separation and how that parallels for the local church today. _____

8. Explain the spiritual dynamic involved when an individual Christian breaks “fellowship” through disobedience. _____

9. Read I Corinthians 5:1-13. Discuss why a Christian’s failure to live separate from the world be a matter for discipline within a local congregation. _____

