

Numbers 22:1–12
The Persistence of Grace

Friday, September 27, 2024 ▫ Read Numbers 22:1–12

Questions from the Scripture text: Who did what in v1? Where did they camp? Who saw what in v2? With what result (v3)? Of what were they afraid (v4)? To whom did Balak send (v5)? What does he say has happened? What does he ask Balaam to do about it (v6)? Why does he ask Balaam, specifically? Who do what in v7? How does Balaam respond (v8)? What do the princes of Moab do? Who asks what in v9? How does Balaam summarize what has happened (v10–11)? What two things does God tell Balaam to (not) do (v12)? What reality about Israel does He give as a reason?

How can God's enemies prevail against His people? Numbers 22:1–12 looks forward to the evening sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these twelve verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **God's enemies cannot prevail against His people.**

Amazing grace. v3 sounds familiar, because the Moabite fear was the same one that motivated the Egyptian oppression of Israel (cf. Ex 1:9–10). The reason that this is amazing grace is that the generation that frightened Pharaoh has fallen in the wilderness under God's righteous judgment. When the arc of their engagement with the Moabites concludes in chapter 25, the Spirit will direct our attention to another census in which we discover that the entire generation has been replaced. This isn't just amazing forgiveness of their sin, but glorious faithfulness to God's promise (Gen 15:5, 22:17, 26:4).

Historical grace. Balaam has a reputation for being a true prophet (v6). He hears from YHWH, and only speaks what He says (v8). Several times since Abraham, we have seen God giving knowledge of Himself outside of Israel. Melchizedek (cf. Gen 14: 18–20) is probably a Christophany. But Jethro was a priest of God, though a Midianite. Now, it wasn't until Christ bound Satan from deceiving the nations (cf. Rev 20:3) that the knowledge of God spread generally outside of the Israelites (cf. Mt 28:18–19). But we see at various key points throughout redemptive history that God gave knowledge of Himself to others for the sake of His plan to preserve Israel and bring Christ through them.

Sovereign grace. We can give some credit to Balak. After seeing what Israel had done to Sihon and Og, he knew that he needed divine intervention. Of course, that is where the credit ends. For, there is only one God, the God Who is determined to bless Israel. Sometimes believers tend to forget this. Some even slip into thinking of Satan as a sort of competing god. But he is not omnipotent or omniscient or even omnipresent—just a creature, infinitely closer to the angels than the Lord. Not to be thought of at all like a mini deity, as if there is some back and forth struggle. No, there is only one God. And that is on display here and throughout the Balaam material. Our God rules and overrules all things. There is no competing power, dear Christian. When the Lord is your help, what can you fear?

This, He also emphasizes to Balaam by the question in v9. It reminds us of Gen 3:11. As if God doesn't know who Balaam's visitors are, or where they came from (v10), or what Balak has said (v11): Surely, in repeating these things to God Himself, Balaam was meant to understand that God is in total control of all of this.

Enduring grace. The sovereign pleasure of God persists. It cannot be changed. The people are blessed, and that will not change (v12). Indeed, Balaam is not even to try to change it through a curse, or even to go with the Moabites. If God is determined to bless—and who could be more sure of God's intention to bless them, than those for whom He has given Christ—then blessing shall come indeed.

What sin in your life has God not only forgiven the guilt of, but refused to let destroy you? How has He ordered the events of biblical history so as to bring Christ into the world? How has He ordered the events of history since then, specifically to bring the gospel to you (and thereby to bring you to Christ)? What is there that you are tempted to fear? Who rises up against the church and against your soul? What can they do against God's sovereign grace? What are some of the precious things you can know that He intends toward you and cannot be prevented?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for Your almighty, faithful determination to bless us in Christ. Grant that we would properly honor You in our hearts, knowing You to be the incomparable, one, living, and true God. Grant that thus we would refuse to fear anything or anyone. And give us to love Your church, which You love—that we would do nothing to harm her or weaken her, and fulfill all our duties to her. Grant this in Your own perfect power and faithfulness we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP56A "Be Merciful to Me, O God" or TPH78 "O My People, Hear My Teaching"

"(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)"

Numbers chapter 22 verses 1 through 12. These are God's words. Than the children of Israel, moved and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho. No bear. Like the son of zippor saw all that Israel had done to the amorites and Moab was exceedingly.

Afraid of the people, because they were many and Moab was sick with thread because of the children of Israel,

So Moab said to the Elders of Midian. Now this company will lick up everything around us. As an ox looks up the grass of the field. And black the son of Zaphor was King and the moabites at that time. Then he sent Messengers to belay on the son of bayor at pathor, which is near the river.

In the land of the sons of his people. To call him saying, look, people has come from Egypt's sea. They cover the face of the Earth, and are settling next to me. Therefore please come at once curse this people for me for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land.

For I know that he whom you bless is blessed and he whom you curse is cursed. So the Elders of Moab and the Elders of Midian departed with the diviners fee in their hand. And they came to belayam and spoke to him. The words of black And he said to them, Lodge here tonight and I will bring back word to you as you always speaks to me.

So, the princes of Moab stayed with belayam, Then God came to belay him and said, who are these men with you? Sublime said to God black, the son of zappor, King of Moab has sent to me. Saying, look at people's come out of Egypt and they cover the face of the Earth come.

Now curse them for me. Perhaps, I shall be able to overpower them and drive them out. And God said to be. Shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people. For they are blessed. And then so far, the reading of God. Inspired. And And Aaron tort Now, the problem.

Black, the son of Zappor, the king of Moab has Is one that sounds familiar to us because it's the same problem that Pharaoh had in Exodus 1 verses 9 and 10. When the people of Israel had grown to be so many that Pharaoh and Egypt were afraid of them.

And now the people of Israel are so many. As. Moab sees them amassing on the other side of their border where the amorites once were That Moab and the king of Moab block is afraid of them. What we however. Remember is that this is not the same multitude? That the multitude of, which Pharaoh was afraid have fallen into the Wilderness, And now this is another generation.

This is a new multitude that even in the wilderness The Lord. Has so blessed and so multiplied. His people. Has to make them frightful to the king of Moab. In fact, when this whole section with the moabites concludes in chapter 25 chapter 26 will begin a new census and what we find with this census at the end of the Wilderness

wanderings.

Is that Israel is almost exactly the same in number as they had been at the beginning of the Wilderness wanderings. And so what this is Amazing, Grace The people who fell in the wilderness fell in the wilderness because they deserved to. God has justly Killed them for their sin, in the wilderness.

And so, here is the grace of God multiplying his people anyway in this Amazing Grace, of course, is a testimony to his faithfulness because the Lord had not just promised to land. He had promised to multiply, he'd promised to Abraham in particular and then to Physique later that he would, multiply Their descendants as the sand on the shore and the stars in the sky.

And we read those promises in places like Genesis 15 5 Genesis. 22 verse 17 and Genesis 26 verse 4 and so here is the Amazing Grace of God over against what we deserve. And keeping his word then there is here. Also the historical grace of God we might scratch our heads Later we're going to hear belyam, referring to Yahweh as Yahweh, my God.

it's known about him that him, He blesses his blessed and whom he curses is cursed and we discover in verse 8, the reason for that. It's because he only speaks what he hears from Yahweh. He tells them Lodge here tonight, I will bring back word to you as Yahweh speaks.

To me. And so you'll wonder how is this guy who's probably a moabite or a midianite we have? The nation of Moab and the King of Moab. Yet. Also, the Elders of Midian. Are all involved in this. How does this guy end up being a prophet of Yahweh and listening to Yahweh?

Well, one answer is we don't know the particulars but the other answer is well of course, the Lord has done it and he's done it for the sake of his people. He doesn't work. Only in Israel, although the gospel and the Covenant are exclusive to Israel at this time yet when it's necessary.

For the good of his people for the bringing of his son into the world, the Lord does also work in isolated cases, throughout the Old Testament. in in others from outside the nation of Israel. We must remember that the Lord works beyond his means and even sometimes without And we've seen this before, perhaps not in the case of Melchizedek it's entirely possible.

I think even probable that Melchizedek is a christophania pre-incarnation appearance. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Back in Genesis 14, 18 through 20, but certainly, in the case of Jethro who was a midianite and yet was a priest unto God. And ended up being Moses's father-in-law or for the purpose of becoming Moses's, father-in-law.

So we must remember that the Lord is always working in history with a view toward towards his Redemptive purposes. His Redemptive plan. So, bringing Christ into the world. Up and up until the coming of Christ and then proclaiming Christ to the whole world, bringing the world as it were to Christ.

Now that Christ has come the Lord Jesus. even in our Matthew passage this week, when he declares, all things have been delivered to me by my my father or I guess that was last week's. Well, this past, Lord's Day is Matthew passage as well. All things have been delivered to me by my father, he's going to say again.

The end of Matthew chapter, 28, all authority in Heaven, and Earth has been given to me. And you remember the way that Revelation 20 verse 3 puts it that Satan has been bound. But not bound generally and entirely but bound very specifically with respect to having free reign to deceive the Nations.

But now that Christ has come and Christ has finished his work and risen and is ascending and he is sending the gospel to the Nations. the gospel will be known, God will be known in Christ. All over the world, not just in Israel. There are many, who Come up with all sorts of ideas of what it means for Satan to be bound.

When it says right there in the context, What the Lord means by Satan being bound means Jesus is now asserting his authority. Just as God worked throughout all history up until Christ's coming to bring Christ into the world. So now, God has been working throughout all history. Since Christ's first coming to take Christ, to take the gospel of Christ to the world or to bring the world to Christ.

So there is this historical Grace and we must not forget that our God works in all places at all times. To his Redemptive purposes, in his Redemptive plan. And then there's Sovereign Grace. The Lord rules over all things, we Begin to think about this a little bit. I think with the idea of historical Grace, But God's Sovereign Grace is not just that he works in all places all times, but that he alone is God.

He is the only true and living God. Now this is a problem for black. We give black some credit. He sees what Israel have done to see Han and OG, he sees how many Israel are Even after coming up out of Egypt, he knows something of the story. He can hardly believe his eyes for how many these people are after wandering, these 40 years in the wilderness, and he draws a Partially, correct conclusion.

I need divine intervention. And I need the good stuff so he doesn't just track down any Religious con man or Wicked servant of some demon that poses as a God, he tracks down a prophet who he knows whom he curses is curse to whom he blesses is blessed. He tracks down a prophet who tells the truth problem is in order for there to be such a prophet, he has to be a prophet of Yahweh, why?

You need Divine intervention. Not just any. God will do. You have to have the one true and living God? He rules over all. However, He has the one to whom these people belong. He is the one who has determined to bless them even over against what they deserve. And so this is a big problem for black, it also becomes a problem for bealam Because the the Elders of Moab and Midian have come with divination in their hand.

It doesn't mean that they also were diviners. I think New King James refers to it, as A fee.

Yep, in verse 7. Refers to it as a The diviner's fee in their hand. The language of money is not But it means money and when Moab doesn't get the answer at once is going to increase.

It's a delivery truck of some sort FedEx.

Really fascinating. Actually fascinated me that they saw them like they were like the Egyptians the same problem as the Egyptians but how do they? It's just interesting to me. They kept the same. Relative number. Usually people, you know, like multiply over time because they're choke, they're more than two kids.

The miracle is that. They survive at all? Yeah.

Thank you.

They significantly increase the amount that they are offering below him and he would like that money, but God is Sovereign and he will do what he wishes, not what man wishes and he emphasizes.

And he emphasizes this to the prophet by asking him, who are these men with you? This reminds us a little bit of back in Genesis 3 11. When God asked, Adam, have you eaten from the tree of course, or where are you? As if God doesn't know When the Lord is asking the prophet who are these men with you and you hear belayim, giving the rehashing in verses 10 and 11, William is realizing God knows.

Who these men are. God knows what these men want. God knows what situation but I am. The prophet is in God is in Sovereign control. And so just putting him through that. Exercise of answering. The question has reminded him of that so that he will know that when God says both, not just you may not curse them but you can't even go with those guys.

Stop looking at that diviner's fee. That is in their hands. Stop looking at their Royal accoutrements as the the leaders of that Nation. Don't even go with them. Because you will not be permitted to curse Israel. They are blessed God's Sovereign, Grace. He is in control and therefore God's enduring Grace.

God is not a man that he should change his mind. If he is determined to bless. Then he will even overcome the sin of Those whom. He has decided to bless. For this, he has given his son, our Lord Jesus for Those whom, he is determined to bless and hear in a historical sense.

He is determined to bring Israel into the land, he is determined to bring them into the land as a great multitude. Why? Because he promised to do these things and because this is the way in which he has decided to bring his son. Into the world. And so we see in this last place, this enduring Grace That were the grace that God is pleased to show, persists, it cannot be undone.

The people are blessed and no amount of money and no amount of asking to curse them.

Can change this. And who can be more sure. Of God's intention to bless them. Than you who have Christ. You for whom Christ, not only came into the world. But whose lives God has so arranged as to hear the gospel of the Lord, Jesus. And then whose heart God has so worked to convince you.

That your creator. Has actually come. And lived and died and risen again for you. And so, if you know that God is determined to bless you according to what Christ deserves according to what God has determined to do for you and give you from before the world began, then you may know that that Grace will endure, he who began the good work, will bring it to completion.

Both his work in you as the Apostle. Rights in Philippians 1 but also of course, his work in the church and his work in the world. It cannot be undone or stopped by the enemies of the church or the enemies of God. However, powerful or however wealthy and even however, religious they So praise God for this.

Amazing Grace, this historical Grace, The Sovereign Grace, this enduring Grace, May he give us? To have our. Hope in him. Hold spray. Our gracious. God and our heavenly Father, we thank you for The way you continue to preserve the people of Israel in the wilderness, even despite all their sin against you guard us from sinning against you.

But Grant to us, a hope that is not and how well we do about how gracious you are that you keep all your promises. We pray Lord that you would give us not to fear man or anything. But to say that our hope is in, And to ask ourselves rightly rhetorically.

Of whom, shall I be afraid? Or of? What shall I be afraid or what can man do to me? Give us this confidence and you are God, make us to see your Sovereign Grace and to worship you. As the one living and true God, who Reigns? Overall. Let us not be anxious.

About anything. Even the Devil Himself. For, he is just a creature. He is just The greatest of the angels and infinitely nearer them, infinitely lower than So, help us not to fear anyone. Oh God, but to fear you And give us that confidence that you who have determined to bless us and loved us and given Christ for us that you surely will together with him, give us all things.

Blessed than our meditation upon this portion of your work. By the ministry of your Holy Spirit. We ask in Jesus name. Amen.