

News & Notes

Sunday, October 25, 2009

Remember in Prayer: Mary Baily; Kenneth Campbell; Sue Daniels; Donna Derryberry; Dot Ketchum; Dallas King; John and Deliah Mann; Carl Perkins; Ann Ray; Curtis Ray; Shirley Rhodes; Katherine Shaw; Becky Strickland; Ruby Tapp; Calvin Ursery; Joan Wilkerson; Alvie Williford;

Sympathy is extended family of Donna Derryberry.

Pantry item for the month of October is pasta.

Bobby Shelby responded to the Lord's invitation wanting to be restored.

Ashland Events: Today: Trunk-or-Treat following evening service in conjunction with the fellowship meal.

Area Events: October 30-31: Youth rally in Ethridge, Tennessee; December 4: Lectureship at the Charleston congregation;

Sermon in Preview:

AM: Balaam—Hearing God (Numbers 22:21-41)

PM: Last-Sunday-of-the-Month Singing

For the Record (October 18, 2009):

Attendance: 69 Contribution: \$1045.00 Budget: \$1459.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

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Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM

Worship 10:30 AM

Worship 5:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King

Jeff Roberson

Carrol Street

ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

"Note Those Who So Walk"

Philippians 3:17

2Thessalonians 3:14

Balaam — Hearing God

Numbers 22:21-40

Jeremy Northrop

There is something appealing to people about supernatural things occurring. Children are often enamored with the tales of super heroes and cartoons that can do things reality simply does not allow. Truth be told, many adults like to hear these stories as well. So many of the Old Testament accounts have supernatural things happening. The New Testament has them as well. These events arouse curiosity in everyone.

One such account is the story of the talking donkey. It is not every day, or any day, for that matter that animals speak language, communicate, and converse with their owners. Unlike the stories of cartoons and super heroes, these accounts are real. A donkey really did speak to Balaam. There is no doubt this would grab attention.

Balak, the king of the Moabites wanted the blessing of Balaam in order to conquer the people of Egypt. He knew of the Israelites conquering the Amonites and knew that those who were blessed by Balaam were blessed and those who were cursed were cursed (Numbers 22:6). He sent messengers asking Balaam to curse the enemy. God told Balaam to stay out and he obeyed. Balak sent more messengers and asked again. God told him if they asked yet again, he could go with them and consult Balak. Balaam went even though this provision was not met and the Lord's anger was aroused.

The Lord then sent an angel to get in the way of Balaam on his donkey and there were three separate incidents when the donkey stopped. Balaam was so focused on what he wanted instead of what the Lord wanted that he was not able to realize these halts were happening at the hand of God. Finally, the donkey, at the hand of God's work, spoke out to Balaam. Interestingly, it seems Balaam was not surprised at the donkey's words but still focused on what he wanted to accomplish. He finally realized (the angel was made visible to him) that these things were the work of God and humbled himself in the sight of God. There are some great lessons to learn from this account.

Balaam's Actions

It took an interesting sequence of events to convince Balaam that he was focused on the wrong thing — himself. He did what so many people today do when they get frustrated. He took his frustration out on an obedient donkey! Instead of focusing on the source of the frustration — his disobedience — he stayed focused on what he wanted to do and was willing to do whatever it took to get the job done. Notice verse 25: A crushed foot did not convince Balaam that he needed to change his ways.

God sent some indirect signals which still did not convince Balaam that he was acting out of his own volition. An angel tried to stop the donkey in the path. Balaam's own foot got crushed. They came to a place in the path where the donkey could not get through and the donkey sat down while Balaam was on it. Balaam had plenty of opportunities to change his mind about the matter. Today, through providential means, God may very well be sending message after message trying to convince His people of one thing or another. Yet often times, like Balaam, His children are so focused on what they want to do they miss the point.

The Donkey's Words

It is an age old fact that God works in mysterious ways. Overpowering a donkey to be able to speak and converse with a human being is most definitely a mysterious way. He accomplished His will through the donkey and finally got through to Balaam. This, of course, supports what the writer of Hebrews

said in Hebrews 1:1. God has communicated in various ways in times past. He communicated his will through a donkey on this occasion.

Many wonder if God can use them in His divine plan. If He can use a donkey, surely he can use rational human beings! He can even use irrational human beings to accomplish his purpose. He used Pharaoh and Rahab in his will at one time (Exodus 10:1; James 2:25). Certainly, he can use His people and even those who are not His people to accomplish and work His will today.

The Angels Commission

Finally, God communicates with Balaam through the angel that stopped the donkey on three different occasions. The angel informed Balaam that he was the one who stopped him and that God was trying to communicate a message to Balaam. He even explains that he could have simply killed Balaam but he did not.

The angel continues by telling Balaam to go to Balak but quickly reminds Balaam that he is only to work and do what God tells him to do. There is, of course, a great lesson for Christians today. They are to only "speak as the oracles of God" (1Peter 4:11). Preachers are commissioned through Paul's words to Timothy to "preach the word" (2Timothy 4:2). Christians need to take this message to heart and work God's plan not their own. Peter said it this way: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Conclusions

God had a plan for Balaam and He certainly has plans for His children today. Yet, a vital lesson to be learned is that every person has a choice. Balaam initially chose not to follow God's plan. While God worked through miraculous means on this occasion, the Christian can be comforted to know that through His providence, He is still working today His purpose to perform. Also, like Balaam, people today need to change their actions when they learn new information. When Balaam learned it was God all along, he moved to replace his own will with God's will. Today, God's followers need to do the same thing. If God can work through a dumb donkey, He can work through His children.