



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Numbers 24: 14-25

“The Prophecies of Balaam, part IV: Jacob’s Awesome Star” TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we are grateful for the word of God and for the way in which Thou hast used it in the lives of the saints and particularly in our lives. We give Thee thanks for the Holy Spirit’s work. We thank Thee for the Lord Jesus Christ of whom the Scriptures speak. We thank Thee for the way in which Thou hast preserved this Word for us to study here in the year 1985. We thank Thee for Moses and the prophets and those who wrote the other books of the Old Testament and the apostles in the new and those who were writers of New Testament books.

We give Thee thanks, Lord, for the tradition of which we have become a part and which has been so marvelously fruitful in the gathering of the people of God to the knowledge of the Lord. We thank Thee for all who are proclaiming the word of God today and we know that in many places over the face of this earth, the word of God is being proclaimed and Lord, we ask the blessing upon those who are Thy people and those who are listening, may the Holy Spirit continue His work of gathering the church of Jesus Christ to himself.

We look forward to the coming of our Lord and the great events of the future and especially to the communion that we shall enjoy with Thee and with the saints throughout

the ages of eternity. May our study tonight build us up in our faith, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

[Message] Tonight, we are returning to Numbers chapter 24 again and our subject is the Prophecies of Balaam, this is number 4 in its prophecies, "Jacob's Awesome Star." And we are going to begin reading at verse 14 and we will read through the end of the chapter. Moses writes and, of course, he is giving the words of Balaam.

"And now behold I go unto my people. Come therefore and I will advertise Thee what this people shall do to Thy people in the latter days. And he took up his parable or his burden and said, "Balaam, the son of the Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: He hath said, which heard the words of God and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty falling into a trance but having his eyes open. I shall see him, but not now. I shall behold him, but not nigh. There shall come a star out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel and shall smite the corners of Moab and destroy all the children of Sheth."

And so then with that "smite the corners of Moab," there is a reference to the whole territory in which Moab lived. So, it's the two sides of the territory as the force of the Hebrew text, and "all the children of Sheth," is not a reference to all mankind. But probably, and there is some doubt about this, but probably as a reference to an ancient people called the Sutu who dwelt in that part of the land. Now, the text reads Sheth and in the Hebrew text, the word is also used of Seth. But evidently, even the translators of the Authorized Version saw it was not a reference to Seth, which would be, of course, all the members of mankind, but rather as a reference to a specific part of people. And in the light of the Hebrew parallelism, "which shall smite the corners of Moab and destroy all the children of Sheth." Since Moab is one of the enemies of Israel, this obviously is

probably an ancient people that also known to Balaam and Balak and Moses, were enemies of Israel as well. So, we’ll think of the Sutu as probably a reference of the expression of the children of Sheth.

“And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.”

I mention again another fact because you may have some translation in which there is difference here. One of the reasons is that the text of Numbers 23 and 4 containing these prophecies is a text over which there is a great deal of question and from the standpoint of the Hebrew text itself. There are different possibilities of interpretation. It seems very plain that the text is a very ancient text and so it's possible to vocalize the text in different ways and come to different meanings, and so that accounts for some of the differences of opinion.

For example, one evangelical translates this: “and shall destroy everyone that remains of and then is the word in Hebrew for city, the word *iyr* also, it seems from this passage, may be a reference a people and so to destroy him that remaineth of *iyr*, is a possibility, city being also the name of a people or city. Now, I think that probably the text that you have, have ‘city’ but you’ll understand why there are differences of opinion in the interpretation of these particular passages and particularly this fourth of Balaam’s prophecies.

Now, one of the things that’s encouraging to me as I read through the Hebrew text and what I gave you is from the Hebrew text, and one of the encouraging things about this is the fact that there is an evidence from the text itself that this is an ancient text. And that’s what we would expect if it is a text that is traceable to Balaam because this was a long time ago. So, it’s a confirmation of the validity and authenticity of this part of the

Book of Numbers. Now, I know some of you don’t have any questions about that, but there are lots of people who do have questions about things like that, and you can be sure that there is a great deal upon which to base your sense of the authenticity of the word of God.

And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable and said, “Amalek was the first of the nations but his latter end shall be that he perish forever”. And he looked on the Kenites and took up his parable and said, “Strong is Thy dwelling place and Thou puttest thy nest in the rock. Nevertheless, the Kenites shall be wasted until Asshur shall carry Thee away captive.” Asshur maybe a reference to a local people or maybe a reference to Assyria and many of the commentators take it to be of Assyria and we’ll take it that way, but we recognize that it’s possible to take it differently would effect of the general sense of the passage.

And he took up his parable and said, “Alas who shall live when God doeth this?” Or since God has determined this. We could translate the expression *misumo*, which is used at that point. And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim and shall afflict Asshur and shall afflict Eber and he also shall perish forever. And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place and Balak went his own way.

Now, this is the fourth and final one of the prophecies of Balaam, the mad prophet from Mesopotamia. Its distinctiveness is the exclusive reference to the future. Notice how it begins. And now behold, I go unto my people, come therefore and I will advertise Thee what this people, that is Israel, shall do to Thy people in the latter days. *Acharit Hayamim* is an expression of the curse in the Old Testament a number of times. Almost always it is a reference to the Messianic Age. And so this is a prophecy that goes on into the distance future.

The principal themes could be listed as these: first of all, there is a theme of the Messianic king, and if you been following along with me, that’s been one of the great emphases of these passages that we are reading from Balaam’s prophecies and you’ll

notice how, if anything, there is a growing expansion of information concerning this King. Notice verse 17, “I shall see him, but not now, I shall behold him, but not nigh. There shall come a star out of Jacob and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.” verse 19: “Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion.” And we've already had references in chapter 3 verse 21 and then in chapter 24 and verse 7 to the Messianic king.

The second of the themes in addition to the theme of the Messianic king found here is the theme of the victorious nation, Israel. Now, we've had a number of references to these. In other words, Balaam is prophesying that in the last days, Israel shall be the preeminent nation among the nations. That's been stated a number of times verse 17 through verse 19, chapter 23 verse 10, verse 24, chapter 24 verse 7 through verse 9, all of these passages lay great stress upon that. So, you can see that one of the major emphases of this early Messianic prophecy is the fact that Israel is to have a king and the people of Israel shall be preeminent among the nations. And in the coming of this king, there shall be a destruction of the national enemies of the Lord God. That's the second of the themes.

And that, of course, is the third of the themes, turning it around and looking not simply at Israel as the victorious nation. The third of the themes is the distant future destruction of the pagan national powers. In verse 17 through verse 19, chapter 23 verse 10 and verse 23 have also laid stress upon that. So, if you read through these prophecies and it would be, I think, a good time of devotional reading for you to go back and read through them, and just notice those three things, the Messianic king, the things that are said about him, things that are said about Israel's glorious future and then the things that are said about the destruction of the pagan nations of the world. That distinction that was made back in the beginning, “Lo, the people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations,” is one of the great emphases of these prophecies of Balaam.

Israel is different from all the other nations of the earth. The reason is that they have national promises given to them. And so they stand out nationally with special

blessings. And individually, Israelites are like anyone else. If they don't believe, they don't enter into those blessings. They're like Gentiles, if they don't believe, they're lost. But, they in addition, have the advantage of the national future. That's why Paul in Romans chapter 3, after he has said there's no difference if a man's an Israelite and he doesn't believe, well he doesn't enter into the blessings because a Jew is not one which is one outwardly. Circumcision is not that which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart and the spirit and not in letter, whose praise is not men but of God.

It's natural for a person to say, "Well then, the Jews don't have any advantage at all." And so, Paul asks the question knowing that that's upon the minds of people, chapter 3 verse 1, "What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision?" And he answers it, "None." Is that right? No. Much every way. Chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. So, the apostle writing in the age of the church, when Israel stands in unbelief having been broken off from the olive tree, cut off its natural branches, still has an advantage much every way. They have the national promises, but in order to enter into them, the individual Jew must believe. The only thing that we can say is that the prophecies of the Old Testament and the New say that God is going to do something in a national way with Israel in the future.

Now, the prophetic situation of this fourth of Balaam's prophecies in the last is described in verse 14 through verse 16. Balaam is given three prophecies now. They haven't pleased Balak a bit, neither one of them. He wanted Balaam to prophesy against Israel, and now he is very upset over the things that Balaam has said because he had the idea that these ancient prophets when they prophesied something, prophesied something that was going to come to pass. And so finally now, it's evident that Balaam is not going to be able to say anything, but what God tells him to say, and God hasn't got anything good to say for the Moabites and He has a lot of good to say for the nation Israel. So in the 14th verse, Balaam says, "Now behold I go to my people. Come therefore," and I

think at this point, Balak would say, "I don't want to hear anymore." But, he's going to speak to him anyway.

Now actually, when he said, "Now behold I go unto my people," he actually did not go. He meant simply that my intention is to return home. We'll read next time as we study next week the final chapter in Balaam's history that he didn't go home. He went down to the Midianites who were living near the Moabites, of course, and there he advised them to seduce Israel through idolatry. And the result was ultimately Balaam's death, as we read in chapter 31.

One naturally asks the question and I haven't raised it up to this point, but not one of you have raised it to me either. You've not come up to me and said, "How did Moses find out about these prophecies?" After all, Balaam was a Mesopotamian mad prophet and Balak was the king of the Moabites. How did Moses find out about this? Well, it's as you read the next chapters and read of Balaam's final death, you get the impression that probably what happened was that as a last resort seeking to save his life, he gave those prophecies to the children of Israel and told them the things that he had said to Balak, that the Lord had said to him.

Now, of course we don't know exactly how he got it, but that would be a very understandable way. If they captured Balaam and they were going to put him to death, and he was slain, I can easily see how this man would want to save his skin by saying, look I've been given by Yahweh four magnificent prophecies of Israel, and I'll tell you my prophecies that I've given, if you will preserve my life. Well, they got the prophecies, but his life was not preserved, as we shall see.

So, he's given them now. Balak doesn't like this, but he says, "I'm going to give you some counsel and my counsel is what these people shall do to thy people in the latter days." So it's a warning about Messianic times. He looks into the future and incidentally he says in verse 16, "He has said, which heard the words of God and knew the knowledge of the Most High." Now in Hebrew text, that's in the present tense, that's

present participle, and really what it means is he has the knowledge of the Most High, not had it, or knew the knowledge of the Most High, but *knows* the knowledge of the Most High. In other words, he's making a claim for present understanding of Yahweh. So, he's a false prophet who has a great deal of understanding of spiritual things, not a strange thing if you think about it.

One might ask, is he talking about the general divine knowledge of God or is he talking about knowledge of this particular prophetic encounter with Balak? Well, probably he's talking about general knowledge of Yahweh. We'll say about that later on.

Now, let's come to the prophetic declaration itself in verse 17 through verse 24, And the star, of course, looms large, and remember that astrological imagery was natural to a Babylonian diviner. Stars were used metaphorically of kings and even in Scripture you have some indication of that. So, the idea of a star that comes out of Jacob is a representation, figuratively a king, would be something that would be known and understood by the people of his day.

This prophecy is a four-fold prophecy. But we're taking it as one because it's spoken at one time. But notice verse 15, "He took up his parable"; verse 20, "And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable," we said that means burden by the way; verse 21, "He looked on the Canaanites and took up his parable," and then verse 23, "And he took up his parable and said...", so this fourth prophecy is a prophecy that has four divisions. And if you want to separate them, then you would have the magical number of seven, and thus seven prophecies in all, but we'll just consider them as if there were four.

So, Balak now could not get Balaam to speak what he wanted, and he couldn't get him to speak when he wanted, but now he can't get him to stop. And so, he's going to pronounce a curse upon the Moabites again and speak of the destruction of the nations of the earth in the latter days. We'll just emphasize two or three things and I want to lay a little stress of the conclusion on some of the general things that arise out of this. Notice

the 17th verse, “I shall see him, or better...I see him, but not now. I behold him, but not nigh.”

Now, when he says that, he’s speaking about being in prophetic ecstasy and as I said this is something, unfortunately for you, I don’t have any personal experience of this. I don’t know of anyone who does, now that’s a very cocky, arrogant kind of thing to say because there have been prophets, and they are mentioned in the word of God. Sunday morning we’ll be talking about one of them by the name of Agabus. But nevertheless, it’s my conviction that there are no prophets today. And therefore, there’s no one who can give us any authoritative information of what it feels like to be a man receiving a message from God as a divine revelation and giving it to people. So, I just am going to describe it in general terms as prophetic ecstasy. What it is, I don’t know. It’d be nice if the Lord would just give me one little prophecy, so I could tell you what it felt like. But, I haven’t had it. I don’t know of anybody who has, and so we’ll just say he was in prophetic ecstasy.

He was carried away outside of himself, in some way his thoughts, no doubt, inwardly directed to a kind of internal vision that he saw, and that’s only a speculation. But he says in verse 17, “I see him, but not now. I behold him, but not nigh.” And what he means by that is that, I see him in prophetic vision but this is something that lies in the future in the latter days. Well, he goes on to say, “There shall come a star out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.”

Now, when he says a star that comes out of Jacob, the figure of the star is very suggestive because the star stresses the suddenness of the coming. You know stars don’t come gradually in the sky, that’s one of the characteristics of a star. You look up and they are there. And furthermore, a star is ordinarily surrounded by darkness. And so, figuratively a star is suggestive of sudden appearance and also appearance in the midst of darkness.

Now, I know it's true that sometimes in the daytime there maybe a star that has lingered, but ordinarily you would think of a star as something that appears suddenly, and it appears amidst of darkness. And so, the reference figuratively is to the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ's second advent will be a sudden coming and it will be a coming in the midst of a great deal of spiritual darkness upon the face of this earth. Only read the Olivet discourse to get a full treatment of what lies back of these brief comments by Balaam, the false prophet.

Now, he says that he's a star out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel, and so obviously, the kingly side of the appearance of the messiah is stressed. I'd like to just point out something that you see in the word of God at this point because I think it is important for us to realize that in these prophecies that Balaam gives, we are dealing with the early stages of the unfolding of Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament. For example, kingdom prophecy against and as the Scriptures unfold these things in the revelatory events of the Old Testament, more and more is added to the divine revelation. And later on, the prophets will use things that they have read from earlier revelation. You will find, for example, that some of the things that Balaam says appear in the later writings of the authors of the word of God. So they studied the scriptures and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, they used things that they themselves had found in the word of God.

The first reference to the kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ is the word concerning the creation of man in Genesis chapter 1, and the statement that he shall have dominion. And that was God's divine intention for men to have dominion. And the Lord Jesus, of course, being the representative man as the one who ultimately in the divine program is the one who shall have dominion for men and in whom we have dominion.

We're told in Genesis chapter 3 that this individual is to be of the human race. He's to be of the seed of the woman. That is all that is said about in there. The seed of the woman shall crush the head of the serpent. So, if you were looking simply at that

prophecy, you would simply say the one who comes and has dominion is a human being. But then in the 9th chapter of the Book of Genesis and the prophecy of Noah, and the statement that Jacob shall dwell in the tents of Shem. We are made cognizant of the fact that, while the redeemer shall come from the human race, he is going to come from one division of the human race, and that division is the Semitic division of the human race.

Genesis 9:24 through verse 27, “Then time continues and finally the great promises are given to Abraham,” and we are told that, “In Thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” And then in chapter 17 it is stated that, “Kings shall come out of Thee.” Twice in that chapter and then that’s confirmed to Jacob. So, we learned then that not only is the Redeemer from the whole human race, and not only is he from the Semitic division, but he’s from Abraham’s family. So, scriptures are narrowing down the description of the coming king.

And then after that, remember in Genesis chapter 49 and verse 10, Jacob, in the midst of the blessing of the tribes, makes a statement regarding Judah. He says in verse 9 of Genesis 49, “Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, Thou have going up. He stooped down, he couched as a lion and as an old lion, who shall rouse him up. The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” Now, the word Shiloh is a word that means something like him to whom it belongs. And so, we learn from this that the Messianic King is to come from the tribe of Judah.

Now, later on, we will also learn that he will come from the family of Jesse and Saul and so on. So, further details are given as Old Testament Messianic prophecy unfolds so that we can, when the Lord Jesus comes on the scene, have a reliable way of identifying him as the promised King from the Old Testament Scriptures. It is said that he will be born in Bethlehem. It is said that he will be born of a virgin. So, there was no excuse.

It was also said in Daniel incidentally that he would come at a particular time. So, there was no excuse for those who studied the Scriptures and were submissive to them, to fail to see that our Lord Jesus was the one. The problem is people don't do that, and that's why the Lord had to say to the disciples on the Emmaus' road, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the Scriptures have unfolded, ought not must I have to have suffered these things and then to have entered into His glory." And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he unfolded on to them and all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. So, now we have in verse 17: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel."

Now, Balaam, of course, doesn't go beyond this and so he doesn't tell us about Bethlehem, and he doesn't tell us about being born of a virgin and things like that. That's later revelation. Balaam is given this particular revelation at this point in the unfolding of the program.

Now, he continues and we read: "And shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." It's a reference, obviously when this individual comes he is going to come in destruction and in the overthrow of national enemies of Israel. "And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies;" that is, his enemies are the enemies of Israel but, "Israel shall do valiantly." Edom, incidentally, is a reference to the people; Seir, to the country where the people live.

Occasionally, you will find people say: "But these things were fulfilled in the times of David." Well, there were anticipations of these in David's time. One can turn to passages in the story of David and find references to his conquering Edom. But the interesting thing about the word of God is that when Edom and Seir -- Seir I say is the country and Edom is the people -- when those things took place in David's time, they were only temporary. And the authority over them was only temporary. And what is destructive to the hypothesis that they have been fulfilled is the fact that after the time of David, the prophecies are repeated in the Old Testament. So obviously, those who were

given the word of God anticipated some earlier foreshadowing of the ultimate completion of the prophecy. But the things in the Old Testament were not the fulfillment of them that awaits the distant future.

He continues in verse 20: “And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable.” Incidentally, looking on Amalek is a reference to the prophetic ecstasy it seems to me. “He took up his parable and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish forever.”

Now, what was Amalek, why is Amalek singled out? Well, we pointed out the other day that Amalek was the first of the pagan nations to open national conflict with the nation Israel. You see, Israel became a nation in Egypt. When they went down into Egypt they were 70 or so people, but when they came out 400 years later, they were a vast multitude. They have become a nation. And it was Amalek that they had their first confrontation with. Amalek was the first of the nations to attack the Nation Israel. And so they are singled out here. “Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.” The enmity of Amalek leads to eternal doom.

One, if you may allow me to make one speculative comment...it says Amalek was the first of the nations and obviously Amalek was not the first nation in existence. It was the first nation to attack Israel, but the fact that he says Amalek is the first of the nations and if you were referring to the fact that Amalek attacked Israel, leads me to think that he is saying there are many other nations that are going to attack Israel. And they may expected to have the same future devastating destruction.

And, in fact, remember that agrees with the thing that was stated in verse 9: “He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth Thee, and cursed is he that curseth Thee.” So, Amalek was the first of the nations that attacked Israel, but there were probably many others down through the years and, in fact, so far as the nations are concerned, a study of human history leads to the

conviction that those who attack the Nation Israel ultimately themselves experienced the wrath of God.

In the 20th century of course, we have seen a great deal of that. We saw it particularly with Germany and we have seen it in other ways, and all that many of the Christians wonder, "Well, what about the Soviet Union? When are they going to get it?" Well, I don't know about that. That's, of course, in the hands of God. But the Scriptures, it certainly seems make very plain that to attack the nation Israel is a very serious thing and one can only expect ultimately destruction because God has given promises concerning the future of the nation.

Now, it doesn't mean that you cannot criticize individual Jewish people or even criticize the Jewish state. For today, Israel is not a believing nation. It's an unbelieving nation. It's largely a pagan entity. And we are talking about the future of the nation Israel because opposition to Israel is often really opposition and rebellion against the Lord God. Well, Balaam makes reference to the Kenites who lived nearby. They were friendly with the children of Israel largely and they would persist until the time that Assyria would come and would destroy them. Assyria would be the means of the discipline of the children of Israel.

In verse 23, the prophecy continues and it gets a little more difficult to be absolutely sure about its terms. "He took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!" Or because of the setting or determination of this. One thinks of Malachi chapter 3 in verse 2 where the prophet in the midst of description of the same events that Balaam is prophesying, talking about the day that comes that shall burn as an often, he says verse 2 of chapter 3: "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like Fullers' Soap." And the reference of course is to the turn of the events that are described as having to do with the Lord's return.

Now, there is a most interesting statement in verse 24, "And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he too shall perish forever", a reference to Assyria. Traditionally, this passage has been interpreted as a reference to ship-borne invaders that come from the west; Cyprus, some have suggested. Alexander the Great with the Greeks, Rome. Some have even suggested rather recently, he is talking the Philistines who were a ship-going people. Ultimately and traditionally, it has been thought that this has a reference to an unknown Western power. Notice, ships shall come from the coast of Chittim; that is to the West. And if this is a reference to ships-borne invaders from the West or ultimately a Western power, who would come in and destroy Assyria.

Well, we know that the King of the North described in Daniel chapter 11 is an Assyrian King and in fact Isaiah calls the antichrist an Assyrian in his prophecies. And so, there maybe is a very veiled reference to the things that Daniel in chapter 11 of his prophecy and Isaiah in his prophecy and all also some of the other prophets like Micah write about much later on. And we know that if that the reference, there is an ultimate promise of the Lord's people overcoming.

Verse 25 concludes, "And Balaam rose up, went and returned to his place and Balak also went his way." Let me sum up in these words. Balaam was an eloquent prophet. Looking at the things that he has written, some of the things that he has written stand out in the word of God. The star out of Jacob, the scepter that comes out of Israel, lo the people should dwell alone shall not be reckoned among the nations, let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his; God is not a man that he should lie and even the son of man that he should repent, he hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob neither has he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord is God is with him. The shadow of the king is among them.

You can see some of these statements are really remarkable statements. And just from the standpoint of literature, he has given us marvelous material. But it would have

been better if he would have been better off if he had never known about Yahweh, because he is a beautiful illustration of the individual who has a great deal of knowledge of the truth. But because he has a great knowledge of the truth and does not respond to it, his latter end is worse than if he hath never known.

Like our Lord’s word to Judas, “Woe to that man through him the Son of man is betrayed. It had been good for that man if he had never been born.” Judas...great knowledge, but rebellion against the Lord, and thus great judgment.

Balaam’s prophecies survey then in broad outlines the future of the nation and the nations. The details are hazy, that’s what you expect? This is the early stage of Messianic prophecy. But it’s clear that the latter days of Messianic, David’s era doesn’t fit, the prophecies are again repeated after the time of David, which indicates that the Old Testament authors did not regard David’s time as the fulfillment of these prophecies. But there were anticipations in them. We can say they were typical of the final outcomes.

The second thing that is clear is that the star, the scepter, is the patriarchal promised king. Remember, in Bethlehem when the wise men come, they say, “We have seen a star in the east.” That’s striking, isn’t it? Where did Balaam come from? Well, it’s stated right here in this prophecy that he came from the mountains of the East. Could it be that it’s Balaam’s prophecies that came to be known in the East? And do the magi, reflecting upon them and seeing that unusual star, make the connection with the Messianic promises, which were widely known.

We know that at the time of our Lord, these Messianic prophecies were circulating in the East. In fact, in one of the commentators on the Gospel of Matthew we read, “The magi were possessed of the general belief in the coming Messiah which the entire East had at this time. Both Suetonius and Tacitus (pagan writers) mentioned a subtle belief that one would come about this time from Judea to subjugate the world.”

Well, this is the source, probably of that prophecy. So the latter days are Messianic, the star, the scepter, referral to the patriarchal promised king. This had come

to be so well known and believed that after the time of our Lord, you may remember that in the 2nd Century, there was a man who arose as a false Messiah among the Jewish people and called himself Bar-Kowkbar. Now, Bar is the Aramaic word for son and Kowkbar is the equivalent of the Hebrew word *kowkab*, which means “star.” So, he called himself the son of the star.

But then, when he submitted to the Romans, the Hebrew people who realized he was not the Messiah that he claimed to be. And incidentally even Rabbi Akiva acknowledged that he probably was the Messianic promised star. When he did, then the people of that time called him Bar-Kazaba, which means “son of a lie.” So, he spoke of himself as Bar-Kowkbar, the son of the star, but the people, when they found out what he really was, called him the son of the lie, but the fact that they responded to him and he gathered a lot of people around him was evidence of the knowledge of the truth of the prophecy of Balaam.

And finally, one thing more is clear, I think, the endless perishing of Asshur takes place at the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ when the world kingdoms become the kingdom of our Lord and His Messiah. He is Jacob’s Shiloh.

Balaam added the words, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,” but Balaam probably perished eternally. The irony of that is striking, isn’t it? “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” But this is a man who did not die of the death of the righteous. And his last end was not like his. Let’s have a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for these prophecies that have been given so many hundreds of years before, but which are so graphically unfoldings of the divine mind and will. And we thank Thee Lord for the marvelous grace that Thou hast manifested in giving these prophecies through the mouth of a pagan false prophet, and giving them first to a pagan nation and a pagan king, Balak, as if to indicate in that very fact the desire that

the pagan nations respond to the divine plan bound up in the messiah of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank Thee Lord for all that is revealed in the word of God and for these great prophecies, and we pray that as the time goes by that we may ponder them and study them and profit from them. Help us in our day to faithfully proclaim Thy word in order that others may enter into the relationship with the Lord that means eternal life. We pray in his name. Amen.