

King James Bible Study Correspondence Course

An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

2 Peter 2:10-16**Lesson 5**

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The Old Testament Balaam would have made a great antagonist in a mystery or action adventure. You know, the kind of character that you root against. He or she is greedy, cunning, and seemingly successful, and you really hope that, by the end of the book the person gets justice. That was Balaam.

The apostle Peter saw Balaam as an example of the false teachers who invade the church. Peter explained this similarity as he continued his description of the characteristics of false teachers, who present a devastating threat to the church. The emphasis of this lesson is how to identify false teachers by their characteristics so that we can escape the traps they lay for us.

In 2 Peter 2:10-16, Peter further unmasked the character of these false teachers with his devastating exposure of their behavior. He showed us just how far immoral corruption will pervade the character and behavior of these apostates. In fact, we can see the fun effects of depravity in these religious teachers of heresy. Whether they know of him or not, false teachers imitate the Old Testament false prophet Balaam.

Indulging in the Flesh

Peter characterized false teachers as those who indulge themselves in their own fleshly desires (2 Peter 2:10). The word "flesh" is not a reference to the soft parts of the body, but rather to the sin nature that each of us possesses. The conflict is between our sin nature and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Believers can obey the leading of the Spirit, while unbelievers are controlled only by the prompting of the sin nature. Since false teachers are unbelievers, they can fulfill only the lusts of their sin natures. They are nonetheless responsible for their actions.

Despising Authority

In addition to indulging their fleshly desires, false teachers despise all authority (2 Peter 2:10). They are given over entirely to serving their own interests, so naturally they conflict with authority. When self is the master, then all other authority is rejected. Christ taught that no man can serve two masters at the same time, for he can love and obey only one of them (Matthew 6:24). The repudiation of authority begins with rejecting Jesus Christ (2 Peter 2:1) and then extends to all other authorities (v. 10).

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Bold Accusations

Peter further described false teachers as presumptuous and self-willed (v. 10). They assume the right to have what they want, so they boldly seek only things important to them. The unsaved person can be selfish only. Even good deeds are performed because they fit the unsaved person's carnal desires in some way.

We see the brashness of false teachers in their slander of church leaders, or "dignities" (v. 10). They are insubordinate to the leadership because their heretical doctrines run counter to the sound doctrines of the church. The same dash would exist over lifestyle issues too. They respond by blaspheming the leadership.

Bold beyond the Angels

False teachers are more daring than the angels in their self-assertion and criticism of authority (2 Peter 2:11). According to Peter, good angels have the authority or power to bring a righteous indictment against unrighteousness, but they do not necessarily do so. They show restraint instead. Peter was saying that those angels show more restraint than the false teachers do.

Peter did not identify a specific occasion when angels refused to bring a condemnation against an authority (2 Peter 2:11). However, he probably referred to the dispute between the archangel Michael and the



2 Peter 2:15

15 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;

(KJV)

The of immorality and greed cannot be compromised with the way of the truth. Balaam's way is in direct opposition to GOD's way.

Devil over Moses' body (see Jude 8-10). Peter's first readers were probably familiar with the incident, since it was popular at the time. The story goes that Satan wanted Moses' body after Moses died, but he had no right to it. Michael contended with the Devil over the matter but refused to administer the rebuke. He left the reprimand to the Lord.

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Irrational Behavior

Another characteristic of false teachers is their irrationality. Peter launched an attack on their irrationality by comparing them to wild irrational animals (2 Peter 2:12). Like animals, they give themselves over to fulfilling the sensual desires of the body. They follow their passions, not rational thinking. This includes leaving God out of their thinking while they seek to serve their own lusts (Romans 1:28-31). Peter's denunciation of them indicates their liability. They are accountable for their actions.

In verse 12, Peter was again pronouncing God's judgment upon the heretics, or false teachers. Just as wild animals are captured and slaughtered, so the judgment of false teachers is fixed and does not linger (v. 3).

Sensuality (and false teachers are quite sensual) is self-destructive (v. 12). The person who is controlled by his fleshly appetites loses everything in the end. Most tragic of all he loses his never-dying soul to an eternal existence in Hell (Matthew 13:41, 42). False teachers sculpt out their own destiny of moral corruption, which leads to their final destruction (2 Peter 2:12).

Peter continued to unmask religious heretics by his devastating exposure of them in verse 12: They speak evil of things about which they are ignorant. While posing as religious authorities, they demonstrate their own spiritual bankruptcy. False teachers have no spiritual life or discernment. They really do not grasp God's truth, so they blaspheme it. They are ignorant even of their own lack of moral restraint and its consequences. These deceivers are themselves deceived. Peter announced their ultimate doom yet again when he declared that they "shall utterly perish" (v. 12). Their heretical doctrines and immoral lifestyle will bring them to their end. Lustful living is subject to the law of living in the flesh (Galatians 6:7, 8). Their perverted way of life will rob them instead of paying them. They will be destroyed in their own pollution, for they will have made themselves victims.

Spots and Blemishes

Men forget that they are accountable to God, but God does not forget. The ultimate judgment that God will pour out on false teachers is just, or fair (2 Peter 2:13).

False teachers feel no shame in their licentious lifestyle. They exhibit their abandonment to sin ("sporting" themselves) in the light of day (v. 13). They are not like most men who wait for the cover of darkness to frolic in sin (John 3:19). This is Peter's way of saying that they cast off all restraints and do not hide their sin in the shadows. They revel in immorality even in daytime. Since they are corrupt to the core, their godliness is only outward (2 Timothy 3:5).

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If they stayed off to themselves, their sin would be bad enough, but their corruption infests the fellowship gatherings of the church (2 Peter 2:13). Peter referred specifically to the fellowship meals of the church, which usually included the Lord's supper. False teachers stain and blemish the fellowship by their behavior. The fellowship meals are marred when they turn them into occasions that portray anything but a fellowship of believers. Fellowship meals become occasions for heretics to sensually satisfy their physical cravings (see I Corinthians 11:20 and 21).

Eyes of Adultery

In verse 14 Peter became more specific as to how false teachers blight the fellowship (2 Peter 2). While joining in the church fellowships, they lust after every woman whom they see as a potential adulteress. The phrase "having eyes full of adultery" can be translated "having eyes full of an adulteress." They simply cannot look at any woman without reflecting on the possibility of persuading her to gratify their lusts. God's Spirit enabled Peter to bring to the forefront the innermost thinking of such men. God knows the hearts of all men, and through the pen of Peter He laid bare the illicit thoughts of these men (Hebrews 4:12).

Their craving for sexual sin is never satisfied (2 Peter 2:14). Lust is always an irritant, for it leaves a person longing for more. It brings men into bondage and out of control. Christ's redemptive work alone delivers from the bondage of sin (Romans 6:6, 7).

Beguiling the Unstable

In addition to being adulterers, false teachers are recruiters of the first order (2 Peter 2:14). They actively engage in luring those who are unstable in their faith. The word "beguiling" means "to catch with bait." The unstable take the bait as a result of the heretics effective teaching. Attacks on the faith then and now are first attacks on the idea of absolute truth. After someone has questioned or rejected the existence of absolute truth, the difference between right and wrong and of true and false doctrine is effaced. Steadfastness in faith quickly topples, and the false teachers have won the day with the unstable.

The false teachers are what they are because they work at it (2 Peter 2:14). Peter explained that they train themselves to desire the morally forbidden. The word "exercised" was used of athletic training. Heretics train themselves from the heart to covet the things that they have no right to. They are left to their hearts' desires, where their illicit desires are spawned.

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Cursed Children

The apostle did not curse the false teachers, but he saw God's curse as abiding upon them (2 Peter 2:14). Peter summarized their ultimate destiny with the expression "cursed children." False teachers live now under the curse of God's eternal judgment, as do an who do not trust in the redemptive death of Christ (Galatians 3:13). Peter was not alone; Paul, too, viewed the unsaved as belonging to God's wrath (Ephesians 2:3).

Unrighteous Wages

Peter drew upon the Old Testament for an illustration of these teachers whose character and ways he exposed (2 Peter 2:15). False teachers resemble the prophet Balaam, who was so greedy for gain that he was willing to pursue it even in disobedience to God (Numbers 22:2-21). The king of Moab, Balak, hired Balaam to curse the Israelites. But God would not allow Balaam to prophetically curse His people, whom He had blessed (23:1-30).

Balaam earned his wages, however. He proposed to Balak an idolatrous, immoral scheme that resulted in the moral lapse of many in Israel, which in turn, demanded God's judgment. The awful scene of Israel's idolatry and immorality at Baal Peor is indirectly tied to Balaam (Numbers 25:1-3; 31:16). Balaam could not curse God, but he could corrupt Israel through his wicked scheme. His wages were unrighteous wages. False teachers blaspheme the Biblical way of righteousness and imitate Balaam's way of gain by promoting immorality.

A Donkey's Rebuke

As Balaam journeyed to curse the Israelites for gain, the Lord encountered him (2 Peter 2:16). An angel blocked his path and frightened Balaam's donkey (Numbers 22:21-35). By God's power, the dumb animal saw the angel, but Balaam did not see him (vv. 23, 25,27,32,33). Balaam beat his animal urging it to move on. The animal spoke to its master, rebuking Balaam for his cruelty (vv. 28-30). The angel appeared to prevent Balaam's journey to curse Israel (v. 35). The prophet's donkey had more perception than the prophet himself. God does not miraculously rebuke false teachers today who follow Balaam's example. God has, however, very clearly rebuked them through the text of His Word.

Notes

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Questions 2 Peter Lesson 5

Your name _____

Helpful readings:

Romans 7:17-18; Galatians 5: 16-17; Jude 8-10; Romans 1: 28-31;
I Corinthians 11:20-22; Numbers 25:1-3; 31:6.

1. What had Peter been telling his readers so far about false teachers ?
2. According to Peter, what were brute beasts made for ?
3.
 - a. What does God do according to each person's deeds (Romans 2:6) ?
 - b. What would happen if He did not ?
4. Why do false teachers blaspheme church leaders ?
5. How are false teachers like irrational animals ?
6. How are false teachers stains and blemishes on church fellowship ?
7. What challenges do false teachers pose to the church ?
8. Why do humans keep on sinning ?
9. Why did Balaam corrupt Israel ?
10. Why was Balaam rebuked by his donkey ?

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11. What does this Lesson teach believers about the motive and purpose for serving CHRIST ?
12. What is the key verse in this Lesson ?

13. List ways to be on the alert for false teachings ?

14. How can you teach these ways to your family, students, or someone to whom you disciple ?

15. Examine your lifestyle. Is it characterized by things that are contrary to God's way of righteousness ?

16. How do you cope with lust and temptation ?

17. Briefly explain the purpose on this Lesson.



Memory verses (write these on the back on the sheet) Romans 7:17-18;
Galatians 5:16-17; Jude 8,10; Romans 1:28-31

Write any questions you may have concerning the subject matter of this Lesson.