

THE STARTLING ORACLES OR PROPHECIES PRONOUNCED BY HIM: THE BLESSINGS OF GOD AND A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE NUMBERS 24:14–25

Introduction

A glimpse into the future — what would a person give to have such a revelation, to be able to see into the future? Would it even be wise to know the future? Would knowing the future bring joy? Sorrow? Pain? Suffering? Anger? Frustration? Loneliness? Unemployment? Divorce? Death? What does lie out in the future? A glimpse into the future is the subject of this passage of Scripture.

Remember what had happened: the king of Moab and his people had become terrified of the Israelites who were camped nearby. They felt hopeless and helpless, so the king sent for a diviner, a sorcerer or false prophet named Balaam who had an international reputation. He wanted Balaam to call upon the “gods” to put a curse upon the Israelites. He felt the curse would help him defeat the Israelites in battle (Num 22:6). This chapter focuses upon Balaam trying to curse Israel, God’s people. However, God stops Balaam in his tracks. God refuses to let Balaam curse His people. Instead, God takes control of Balaam’s tongue and makes seven astounding prophecies about His people, prophecies that speak to all of God’s people down through human history. This is: *The Story of Balaam and the Seven Startling Oracles or Prophecies Pronounced by Him: The Blessings of God and a Glimpse into the Future*, 23:1-24:25. Here we discuss the last four Oracles.

- I. The 1st prophecy: the blessings of God’s people (vv. 23:1-12).
- II. The 2nd prophecy: the source of the blessings, God Himself (vv. 23:13-26).
- III. The 3rd prophecy: a picture of how God blesses His people (vv. 23:27-24:13).
- IV. The 4th prophecy: a picture of the coming Deliverer (vv. 24:14-19).
- V. The 5th prophecy: a picture of victory over the greatest enemies (vv. 24:20).
- VI. The 6th prophecy: a picture of the greatest fortresses of the enemy being defeated (vv. 24:21-22).
- VII. The 7th prophecy: a picture of God’s judgment against all whose “cup is full of iniquity” (has reached the full measure that God allows) (vv. 24:23-25).

I. *Numbers 24:14–19 The Coming Deliverer – The Lord Jesus Christ*

The fourth prophecy focused upon the coming Deliverer. This was a picture of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messianic Ruler over all the universe.

1. There was the preparation for the prophecy (vv. 14-16). Just as Balaam turned to leave, suddenly he was constrained by the power of God to begin prophesying.
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The subject of this prophecy concerned the “latter days,” the “days yet to come.” Of course this is a reference to the future. Balaam declared...

- that his eyes saw the future clearly
 - that he actually heard the words of God
 - that he had knowledge from the Most High
 - that he saw a vision from the Almighty
 - that his eyes were opened to see into the future
2. The prophecy focused upon the coming Deliverer, the coming Messiah who was to reign as the Sovereign LORD over all (vv. 17-19). Note exactly what was said:
- a. He would come in the future. The false prophet saw Him but His coming was not yet near (v. 17).
 - b. He would be a star and a sceptre that would come out of Jacob and rise out of Israel. This is a reference to the rule and reign of Jesus Christ during the Messianic Kingdom and throughout all eternity (v. 17).
 - c. He would be victorious. He would crush both Moab and Edom (v. 17). Imagine the impact of these words upon the king of Edom standing right there listening to this prophecy as it was being proclaimed.
 - d. He would guarantee the growing strength of His people, Israel. They would grow stronger and stronger (v. 18).
 - e. He would guarantee the triumph and dominion of God’s people. He would lead God’s people to destroy all their enemies (v. 19).

Thought 1. Jesus Christ is the promised Deliverer, the Messiah and Messianic King who was to come and rule over all the universe. He is the Sovereign LORD and King of the universe.

Luke 22:29-30 “And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Luke 23:42 Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

John 1:49 Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”

John 16:33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

John 18:36 Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

John 18:37 “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

1 Cor 15:22-24 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

1 Cor 15:25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

Rev 3:21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Rev 17:14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings — and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.

Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Isa 53:12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Jer 23:5 “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.”

Dan 7:14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

II. Numbers 24:20 Victory over the Greatest of Enemies

The fifth prophecy focused upon the victory of Israel over the greatest of enemies. This prophecy and the final two are brief predictions concerning the enemies of God’s people. These prophecies must have shaken the king to the core of his being. His purpose had been to bring a curse upon the Israelites; but instead he was being cursed and, not only him, but all the other enemies who stood opposed to the people of God. They were having the curse or judgment of God cast upon them as well. One thing was sure: it was not wise to oppose God’s people. The prophecy was very simple: the false prophet saw Amalek and prophesied that this greatest of nations would be destroyed.

Thought 1. There is one strong lesson in this prophecy: victory is assured to God’s people, even over the greatest of enemies. No matter how strong the enemy, no matter

how great the assault, no matter how often the attack — victory belongs to God’s people. The believer will conquer and triumph over all enemies, even the greatest of enemies.

(1) God gives victory over death.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 14:1-2 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”

Heb 2:14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

(2) God gives victory over the world with all its enslavements and bondages.

John 8:32 “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Rom 6:11-14 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Rom 7:21-25 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Rom 8:2 Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

1 John 5:4-5 For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

(3) God gives victory over the evil of men, over all who oppose us and stand as enemies against us.

2 Tim 4:18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Exo 23:27 “I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run.”

Exo 14:14 “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

Psa 44:5 Through you we push back our enemies; through your name we trample our foes.

(4) God gives victory over the temptations and trials of life.

1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Psa 34:19 A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all.

Psa 41:3 The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness.

Isa 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

(5) God gives victory over all the evil powers and rulers of darkness, over all the spiritual wickedness that attacks us.

Eph 6:10-13 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Jas 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

1 Pet 5:8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Rev 12:11 They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

(6) God gives victory over any person or any thing, in this world and in the spiritual world.

Rom 8:35, 37-39 Who shall separate us from the love [compassion] of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(7) God gives us victory over persecution.

2 Cor 4:17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

1 Pet 4:12-13 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

III. Numbers 24:21–22 The Fall of the Greatest Fortresses of the Enemy

The sixth prophecy focused upon the greatest fortresses of the enemy being destroyed. Note that the Kenites were said to be secure, living behind an impregnable fortress. But they would be destroyed.

Someday out in the future, the great nation of Assyria would conquer the Kenites and take them captive. This is a prophecy that was looking ahead to the future, several centuries ahead. Assyria was not yet a powerful nation, not the powerful nation that was to be moving across the face of the earth seeking world domination. It should be noted that some commentators say that Asshur mentioned here was actually a small tribe that lived in northern Sinai (Gen 25:3, 18; 2 Sam 2:9; Psa 83:8). If this is accurate, it means that the Kenites were conquered by a small tribe of people who lived close by. However, this position is most unlikely.

Thought 1. Every believer has certain enemies that seem impregnable, immovable. Certain temptations and trials seem to afflict him time and again. Temptation after temptation and trial after trial seem to lurk behind fortresses that just cannot be torn down. The believer tries to get rid of the temptations or trials, but they seem to be secure, settled in as though behind concrete fortresses — immovable, impregnable. The barrage of temptations and trials seems relentless. At times they attack the mind: the believer tries his best to get rid of the thoughts continually assaulting him. Foul words, lustful thoughts, cravings for food, drugs, or alcohol; seeking recognition or position; coveting more money, possessions, or property — a shower of tempting thoughts assault the believer all throughout the day. No matter how hard he tries, the temptations or trials seem to be impregnable; they cannot be cast down. But note the strong proclamation of Scripture: the greatest fortresses of the enemy can be destroyed. This is the promise of God.

Rom 8:35, 37-39 Who shall separate us from the love [compassion] of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Cor 10:4-5 *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

Eph 6:10-13 *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

Heb 4:12 *For the word of God is living active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

1 Pet 5:8-10 *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

Psa 44:5 *Through you we push back our enemies; through your name we trample our foes.*

IV. Numbers 24:23–25 The Judgment of God Against All Enemies

The seventh prophecy focused upon God's judgment against all enemies whose "cup was full of iniquity." This simply means that a nation had reached the full measure of evil that God allows. They would not be allowed to go any farther, not allowed to continue committing one atrocity after another. They would be judged and destroyed as a nation.

Note that Balaam again prophesied the future. Assyria and Eber would be destroyed by an invading force coming from across the sea. After this prophecy, Balaam and Balak separated and returned home.

Thought 1. The judgment of God will fall upon the wicked and evil, the lawless and immoral of this earth. There will be no escape. When the "cup of iniquity" is full, when the full measure of sin has been committed by a person — that person will leave this earth and face the judgment of God. But note: this is not only true of individuals, it is also true of nations. When the "cup of iniquity," the full measure of evil and brutality, has been filled to overflowing by nations — that nation will be destroyed by the terrifying hand of God's judgment. This is the record of human history, as any objective and honest historian can testify.

(1) God will judge the nations of this earth.

Mat 25:31-33, 41, 46 *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.... Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’....Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

Acts 17:31 *For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”*

(2) God will judge the people of this earth, individual by individual — every one of us.

Rom 2:16 *This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.*

Rom 14:12 *So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

Heb 9:27 *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,*

2 Pet 2:9 *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*

2 Pet 3:7 *By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*

Jude 1:14-15 *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” ■*