

Balaam: Oracle #2- God does not Lie

Good morning.

Today in 2015 is **Palm Sunday** on the church's calendar – the day that Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey and the crowds went wild. And so did the unbelieving Pharisees, Scribes and priests – they *also* went wild but with their hatred. No matter how loving and gentle we are as Christians, ultimately the world will hate us because of Who we carry.

For the past five sessions, we've been looking at the 1st two Oracles of Balaam. His words are actually God's words, as God will only permit him to say certain things. In the 2nd Oracle, God declares that He is not a man, He does not lie, He does not change His mind and He always keeps His promises.

SLIDE: "THAT'S A FACT, JACK"

➤ *And... "That's a fact, Jack."*

You might remember this phrase from the Movie *Stripes* with Bill Murray; you can also hear this phrase from Uncle Si Robertson if you watch *Duck Dynasty*.

<click> According to the Urban Dictionary, "*That's a fact, Jack*" is *a statement that is true in the **absolute** sense, and will not even **tolerate** a discussion.*" It's *so* true that it is senseless to even debate it.

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Well, today we're going to talk about a reality about God's character for which you and I can say with absolute certainty – that's a fact Jack. *And that is that...*

SLIDE: GOD OF TRUTH

"It **is impossible** for God to lie."

Hebrews 6:18

God is a God of truth – and therefore it is IMPOSSIBLE for Him to lie. *"That IS a fact, Jack."*

- "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He" (Deuteronomy 32:4).
- "His truth endures to all generations" (Psalms 100:5).
- "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).
- "Your word is truth" (John 17:17).
- "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (John 18:37).

Truth is part of God's Nature, and therefore, it is impossible for God to LIE because He would be going against His Own NATURE! He will not – He CANNOT – do it.

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The father of lies

Satan, on the other hand, is the exact opposite. Satan is the FATHER of lies. Jesus described him as a liar from the beginning. Satan evidently is a very clever and seductive Liar, as he convinced 1 / 3 of the angelic host to follow him, and he convinced Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit in the garden.

And, in our sinful nature, we all have lied at some time. There is no person who ever lived who could boast of never having lied – except for Jesus, of course. But, in spite our own history, it seem ironic that **most of us have a natural inclination to oppose lies**– unless, of course, we are the standard politician or telephone solicitor.

I can remember reading *Dante's Inferno* in the 9th Grade with the nuns. In the book – which was actually a poem – is part of a trilogy – *Inferno* (or hell), *Purgatorio* and *Paridiso*. Dante was obviously a Catholic.

The overall theme is that Dante is on his spiritual journey to find salvation, gets lost and is rescued. He is taken on a guided journey which begins in hell. He starts out on Holy Thursday (coincidentally this next Thursday) and passes through the gate of Hell, which bears an inscription, the ninth (and final) line of which is the famous phrase "*Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.*"

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The book depicts hell as a series of nine concentric circles down into the earth. The different categories of sin are punished in different circles, with the depth of the circle (and placement within that circle) symbolic of the amount of punishment to be experienced. Each sin is punished in a manner of poetic justice

- for example, fortune-tellers have to walk forward with their heads on backward, unable to see what is ahead, because they tried to see the future through forbidden means.

Sinners placed in the upper circles of hell are given relatively minor punishments, while sinners in the depths of hell endure far greater torments.

- Now, the nuns cautioned us not to believe that everyone mentioned in the book as being in hell is actually in hell. I later realized that they did this because Dante mentions three specific popes as being there – which I saw as somewhat funny.

Now, in the book, liars are consigned to the Eighth Circle of Hell, the next to lowest circle, with the Ninth Circle being reserved for traitors (a form of more serious lying). The greatest liar, the father of lies, is at the very bottom of hell encased in ice. Why ice? Because emotion can be in two

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opposite types – it can be either fiery hot and irrational or icy-cold and calculating. While people in the other Circles of hell are subjected to punishment that is a reflection of their hot temper, lusts, greed and so on that they exhibited in life, Dante depicted Satan as being icy-cold with no emotion or conscience at all, hence trapped in ice. Satan shows no remorse for what he has done – this type of anger is one of silence, frigidity, resolution and separation – icy cold.

Now, since Dante assigned liars and traitors to the 8th and 9th Circles of hell, he obviously saw falsehood as the ultimate betrayal – the opposite of Truth and the God Who is truth and Who CANNOT lie – which, as I said, is the main topic today.

OK – What is a lie? In his first letter to the church, the Apostle John states that “no lie is of the truth” 1 John 2:21.

- The Apostle John **defines a lie by its opposite** – it is NOT Truth; it is like darkness is to light.

A lie is the opposite of Truth. In his Gospel, John wrote: “Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil **hates the Light**, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed....” John 3:19

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'Everyone who does evil hates the Light'. This why Adam and Eve hid from God; they thought they could escape from His view by hiding in the darkness. They instinctively knew that evil was not condoned in His presence.

- And when they used fig leaves to cover their nakedness. Augustine said that the fig leaves were symbolic of the lies people tell to cover their sin.

In essence, they were lying about their sin. We instinctively oppose anything that puts us in a bad light – we want to hide from Truth and conceal the sin, cover it over.

- But, the truth is that we also have a longing for truth – to return to truth – it's an echo of a distant memory that instinctively we knew was good and pure.

SLIDE: Cherry Tree

According to legend, a young George Washington confessed to cutting down a cherry tree by proclaiming, *"I cannot tell a lie."*

I always have admired Washington because of his character – he *voluntarily* gave up the presidency after two terms, even though most wanted his to continue. Think of all the presidents we have known in our lifetime up to and

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including today – who among them – Democrat or Republican – would have done that? Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected to 4 terms and the only thing that stopped him for running for a 5th term was that he died. After FDR, the people saw the danger in having a king or dictator for life; so the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution was added in 1951, stating that no one can be elected to the office of the president more than twice.

Now, who knows if the story about Washington chopping down the cherry tree is true, but the fact that the story is still around is a **testament to how much respect we have for honesty.**

- Honesty is a characteristic we long for in our God also – and God affirms that He never will lie.

OK: brief summary of last presentation: The last time, we looked at the Holiness of God and saw, somewhat surprisingly, that Scripture plainly states that God is so Holy that even an unintentional sin is an offence against that Holiness. It is so much an offense that it needed an innocent animal to die so that a person could be in His presence.

- This is opposite how most of us view sin – if we do something *unintentionally*, how can that be sin, we wonder.

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- In normal thinking, I might agree, but when it applies to God's Holiness, it is a woefully ignorant statement.
- Red paint spilled *unintentionally* on a white rug is just as offensive to the whiteness of the rug as if it was done intentionally.

We also saw that the Levitical sin offering covered only unintentional sin. Intentional sin, high-handed sin, was NOT covered by the Levitical sacrificial system. The only hope of forgiveness was once a year on the Day of Atonement. Then, the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of sacrifice and sprinkled it on the Mercy Seat. A sacrifice and a High Priest were needed – and these were shadows of Christ.

SLIDE: TOPICS

OK – Here are the main items that I want to address today. They all relate to the fact that God is Holy that He is TRUTH and therefore *does not / cannot* lie. Consequently, ALL His promises will come true:

- God is Holy and He does not Lie
- God keeps His promises to Israel and to us.
- Jesus is the Amen to God's promises.

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So, let's investigate what it means to lie and the fact that God does not lie. In fact, God is the only Being Who is INCAPABLE of lying. Everything that God said WOULD happen HAS or WILL happen—just as He said it would. When He makes a promise or statement, He does it with perfect knowledge of all its consequences and outcomes, and so He is never surprised or forced to change His mind and go to Plan B.

SLIDE: Famous lies – slides (Charlie Brown/Lucy)

We, on the other hand, both lie and are lied to every day.

We're actually bombarded with lies – as we should expect, since the world is subject to the father of lies.

- I hate to use politicians and the government as an example of being lied to every day – but they're such easy targets. They parse words, they spin events, they purposely mislead and suffer a truly amazing amount of computer crashes when trying to respond to Freedom of Information requests. **They are masters of the Fig Leaf!**

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- Talking about politicians, Groucho Marx once said *“These are my principles. If you don’t like them, I have others.”*

I once used this particular slide about Lucy and Charlie Brown trying to kick a football at a governmental conference. I attended as my federal agency’s air quality specialist in New York and was asked to give a presentation about current governmental regulation and how close cities in NY were to meeting the air quality standards. At the time, almost every area except NYC would soon satisfy EPA’s air quality standards regarding pollution coming from transportation sources. I documented how the air quality was improving, but noted that EPA regulations are somewhat like Lucy and Charlie Brown’s attempt to kick a football ... Once you’re just about to satisfy the regs and be free of sanctions, EPA has the tendency of pulling the ball out and then moving the goalposts. Everyone laughed – except for the EPA people there. However, I was subsequently proven correct in this regard.

<SLIDE> Another example of Lies – the nurse holding the big needle says *“this won’t hurt a bit”*. Or a politician saying *“if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor – period. If you like your medical insurance, you can keep your medical insurance. You even will save \$2500 a year on medical insurance. Trust me!”*

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<SLIDE> And we all are aware of the great lie – Genesis 3:4–5:

“The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

We're accustomed to lying in our culture – if you don't believe that, just consider all the different brands of anti-aging creams in the cosmetic counter – none of them has ever lived up to their claims, but a 17-oz jar of Channel's SUBLIMAGE LA CRÈME will still cost you \$134.

- Do we actually believe that a \$125 pair of Air Jordan sneakers really make a white guy jump higher?
- Is Sam Adams really "the best beer in America?"
- Will Miller Genuine Draft bring snow to Chicago in midsummer and get you a date with a supermodel?
- These are all lies designed to convince us that we can achieve our secret desires.

Some lies we classify as *Acceptable* lies – we call them 'white lies'. These are lies that help others. Such white lies are required in many cultures, where saving face is important, and not telling lies to protect others is considered a bad and selfish thing.

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SLIDE: ABRAHAM LINCOLN

- Geico advertisement: Honest Abraham Lincoln advertisement with his wife, “*Does this make me look fat?*”

Understandable dilemma and ripe for a white lie.

But, a problem ALL of us have is that we deceive ourselves into thinking that ALL the lies WE tell – and those whom we like tell to others – ARE white lies, acceptable.

- We *excuse* a lie from a person we like and respect – that’s how so many politicians and false teachers in church get by. We’ll say that they misspoke, or misremembered, or innocently embellished the truth, made an honest mistake, or just got carried away in the moment. It was just a harmless Fig Leaf.
- Of course, if the same mistruth is told by someone we dislike, then we consider it to be an outright indication of their corrupt nature of their souls.

It’s no wonder why the angels sometimes shake their heads in amazement that God could love us.

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It takes integrity and courage to tell the truth, especially in the face of opposition. George Orwell (1984 fame) said, “*In a time of deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.*” Jesus in that sense *was* a revolutionary – not in the sense of trying to overthrow the government to bring about social justice or initiate God’s secular reign on earth – as some LIBERAL THEOLOGIANS & the KINGDOM–DOMINION teachers WOULD HAVE YOU BELIEVE.

- Jesus was trying to overturn the wrong perceptions about God. God is different from us – He is Holy, His is Truth, and lies cannot remain in His presence.

➤ God does not LIE.

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SLIDE: WHAT IS A LIE?

“...no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but the person who denies that Jesus is the Christ?” I John 2:21-22

The Apostle John defines a “lie” by its *opposite* – TRUTH. A lie is not the truth – that seems fairly obvious but it is basic to understanding one of God’s great characteristics – He is Truth, He is absolute truth – so there is nothing ever false about Him.

- He doesn’t exaggerate, He doesn’t sugar coat, He doesn’t say one thing and then do another, He doesn’t *pretend* to be something He is not.
- As far as God is concerned, there is no such thing as *mixed* truth; His statements don’t contain 98% truth and 2% untruth.

We, on the other hand, do all of those things and we are a mixture *by our own choice*. Thankfully, He is greater than we are.

OK – with that intro, let’s continue in the Book of Numbers and Balaam’s 2nd oracle that occurred as the Israelites camped in the Plains of Moab just across from Jericho. This is actually my 4th presentation on this Oracle, which highlights its importance.

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<Cross on forehead, lips and heart.>

SLIDE: TITLE PAGE: 2ND ORACLE FROM GOD: NUMBERS 23:13–26

GOD DOES NOT LIE

13 And Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place, from which you may see them. You shall see only a fraction of them and shall not see them all. Then curse them for me from there." And he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here beside your burnt offering, while I meet the Lord over there." And the Lord met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and thus shall you speak." And he came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the Lord spoken?" And Balaam took up his discourse and said,

"Rise, Balak, and hear;

 give ear to me, O son of Zippor:

19 God is not man, that he should lie,

 or a son of man, that he should change his mind.

Has he said, and will he not do it?

 Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

20 Behold, I received a command to bless:

 he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it....

25 And Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all, and do

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not bless them at all." 26 But Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'All that the Lord says, that I must do?'"

As you might remember, the Oracle was given by a character named Balaam. **Balak**, the King of Moab, is nervous with this vast number of people in his backyard, and he is also being spiritually provoked by Satan to prevent their entrance into the Land.

Knowing that he could not possibly win a standard military victory over a people whose God defeated the mighty Egyptians 40 years earlier, Balak realizes that he has to change the balance of power in the *spiritual* realm for battling in the *physical* realm. So, he hired **Balaam**, a famous sorcerer, to bribe Yehovah and thereby get Him to **go back on His promises and curse on the Israelites**. And, as we saw, Balaam's 1st attempt was a miserable failure as far as Balak is concerned.

Even though Balaam tells King Balak that he can only say what Yehovah permits him to say, Balak thinks that what's really needed is just **A CHANGE OF LOCATION**. Balak **suspects Balaam may have been intimidated** by the vast number of Israelites (2–3 million people) that he could see from where he was on the mountain.

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- So, Balak takes Balaam another place where he will be able to see only a *small* portion of the Israelites and perhaps not be so intimidated.
- So, they go to the top of **Pisgah**, and once again, they built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar – trying to bribe Yehovah into cursing Israel. The results are the same as the first time – God will not change His mind about His promise to bless Israel.
- God also states that not only will He NOT change His mind, but that He **CANNOT change** and He **CANNOT LIE**.

OK – let's look at what was said in the 2nd Oracle.

SLIDE: GOD IS NOT A MAN

Verse 19 says: "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a human being, that He should change His mind."

- Like the Apostle John did when he defined a lie by its opposite the TRUTH, God describes Himself in terms that men best comprehend -- and the sorry fact is that we best comprehend the negative. He is TRUTH, and therefore He does not lie like men do. He does not go back on His

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promises, like men do, so He is reliable. God is of all those things that men PRETEND they are but are not.

<click> This all relates to God being The “Holy One”, which is the one most commonly used designation for Him in Jewish thinking. The idea of the holy (kadosh) implies a distinction – the realm of the holy is *entirely set apart* from the common, the typical and the unclean. The Holy is singular, awe-inspiring, even “terrible” (Ps. 68:35)

SLIDE: GOD IS NOT A MAN (2)

- God forces Balaam to tell Balak that God is not a man – and therefore, unlike men, God does NOT Lie, He does NOT Change His mind, and He does NOT forget His promises.

Yehovah, unlike men, has Truth as a core characteristic; a god that condones lying or who changes his mind or breaks his promises is a god made in the image of MAN.

- The notion of a God that does not lie or change His mind was a STRANGE one back *then*, and in some respects is equally strange today.

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- Here's a modern example – politicians and “moderate Muslims” routinely assert that Islam is a religion of peace and that Allah is the same god that Christians and Jews worship. Neither of these assertions are TRUE.
 - Now, because these assertions are NOT true, either the people who espouse them are totally ignorant of the basics of both Islam and Christianity or they are outright lying.
 - Or, perhaps it is the case of our politicians telling us what they perceive as white lies is for our own good.
- Why is it a lie? How about the fact that the god of Islam actually APPROVES of lying if it advances the cause of Islam. Islam is probably the ONLY religion today that holds that purposeful deception is OK. The Islamic term for this is *al-Taqiyya*.
 - According to an Islamic website, "*al-Taqiyya*" literally means: "*Concealing or disguising one's beliefs, convictions, ideas, feelings, opinions, and/or strategies at a time of imminent danger, whether now or later in time, to save oneself from physical and/or mental injury.*" <http://www.al-islam.org/shiite-encyclopedia-ahlul-bayt-dilp-team/al-taqiyya-dissimulation-part-1>

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- The simple fact that a god who endorses lying **absolutely eliminates** him from being the God of the Bible. Yehovah says He does NOT lie! So, when people attempt to equate Allah with Yehovah, **they** are lying – intentionally or not.

I believe that verse 19 is one of the PIVOTAL verses in Scripture – God says He does NOT LIE and does NOT CHANGE HIS MIND. He is telling us about Who He is. He is *also* giving us an important benchmark with which to evaluate claims of “new revelation”.

For example, one off-based teaching we can hear today is that **God HAS changed His mind on some things now that we're under the New Covenant** – and perhaps He will do so again through new prophetic revelations.

- Case in point: most people in prophetic ministries confidently assert that God no longer holds to His historic criteria for judging prophesy and who is a prophet. The criteria use to be 100% accuracy. Now, prophets are allowed to be frequently inaccurate, and prophecy is allowed to contain a mixture of God's truth and human error.

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- I want to assure you it takes some extreme 'Pilates'-stretching positions to reach these conclusions.

But WHY do they do this? I believe most are sincere. They are Christians who WANT to hear the Lord, they WANT to prophesize and be active participants in His Kingdom. But I believe that their redefining of prophecy is an attempt at a **man-made solution to a significant problem they face** – their numerous inaccuracies.

It's very similar to what Abraham did when he tried to help God along in fulfilling His promise of many descendants by having a child with Hagar. They're trying to help God along with His promise of never forsaking us or leaving us orphan. Well-intentioned – but that didn't work out very well.

- And – please excuse my Rhode Islander background – they are also exhibiting an all-too-human tendency that was first modeled by Adam and Eve – they're trying to use a **FIG-LEAF to cover their butts**. This new theory serves as cover for prophetic inaccuracies and thus it helps them continue in their prophetic ministries.

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Perhaps that seems harsh; as I said, I don't ascribe any sinister motives to them. However, I'm concerned about this because what they don't stop to realize is that this approach **ultimately undermines trust in God, faith in His promises, and it lessens our sensitivity to His Absolute Holiness.**

- You see, IF God *has* changed His mind on certain things, then *He evidently LIED to us* when He said He *DOESN'T* change His mind.
- If God DOES change His mind, what then can we be certain of regarding what He has said and promised?
 - **What blessed assurance would we have that He will never change His mind about salvation through FAITH in Christ alone. Or that we will be resurrected from the dead?**

➤ And, if God does change His mind, how do we evaluate claims of new prophetic revelation? Scripture would no longer be the benchmark against which we test all things. Subjective human reasoning and emotional assessments like “It feels good” would reign as the Divine yardsticks.

I consider this new line of reasoning to be dangerous theologically. IT IS LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR SERIOUS DECEPTION.

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It all comes back to Verse 19 where God says that **He is NOT like men**. He does NOT need to invent fig leaves to cover failure. He does not change His mind when things don't work out as planned; and He doesn't need help to fulfill promises.

I praise God **BECAUSE** He is NOT like us. We have to resist ANY attempt to remake God in our own image, otherwise we will be worshipping a false idol.

- Jesus said that He is the SAME yesterday, today and forever. Is everyone OK?

Let's look further at the Oracle.

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SLIDE – SHOUT OF A KING

Verse 21 states: "The Lord their God is with them, And the shout of a king is among them."

- 'Shout' – the Hebrew word (*terua*) normally refers to an alarm or signal given by a trumpet.

The word is used (Lev. 23:24 note) to describe the sound of the silver trumpets. The "shout of a king"; therefore, refers to the jubilant sounds by which the presence of the Lord as their King among them was celebrated by Israel.

Verse 21 is – at least to me – one of the most amazing statements made in these three chapters about the oracles. Remember: *There is no physical king yet in Israel at this time*, and yet, Balaam states that the "shout of a king is among them". Balaam recognizes that these people HAVE a King – the Lord Himself, and that it is very obvious in their worship and celebrations.

- 'The Lord, their God, is with them'. Even if they anger Him and rebel against Him, He does not move from their midst.
- The verse also speaks about us – God's view of us because Jesus is King in our midst.

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- And, I'm sure just by coincidence, it also speaks to today
– Palm Sunday.

SLIDE: Palm Sunday (March 29, 2015)

The shout of a King is among them – what a marvelous word!

It actually anticipates today – Palm Sunday. The Lord their God walked among them and the people **shouted** when they saw Jesus: that He was their **King**. Matthew's gospel records:

"Tell the daughter of Zion,

'Behold, your King is coming to you,

Lowly, and sitting on a donkey,

A colt, the foal of a donkey.'" Matt. 21:4-5

"Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' Hosanna in the highest!" Matt. 21:9

The hostile Pharisees, who Jesus described as children of Satan, looked out at the cheering crowd and were both furious and afraid, just as King Balak was when he looked out at the Israelite encampment and god's presence among them.

- Funny how, down thru the ages, children resemble their spiritual parent in many ways.

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SLIDE: GOLDEN GATE

SLIDE: GOD SEES NO INIQUITY IN ISRAEL

VS. 20–2 says: “Yahweh has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel.”

Click: I believe that this verse puts the final nail in the coffin of the false teaching that Christians can be affected by generational curses -- here is Israel, one generation from their parents who were so mistrusting of God that they were barred from the Promised Land. Like their parents, this generation is also full of constant grippers and complainers, chastised many times by God for their behavior, and yet God says that He finds NO iniquity in Israel. He made a promise that this 2nd generation WOULD enter the land, and He keeps His promises no matter what! There cannot be a curse on ANYONE when He is present among them.

- This settles it for the Christian who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit – *how could God curse someone in whom He Himself dwells?*

I have read a lot of material pro & con on generational curses and I don't recall *ever* coming across this verse, but here it is and it DESTROYS the general–curse–on–Christians argument.

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If any generation was going to carry such a curse because of their parents' behavior, it would have been this one, and yet God says that He sees NO iniquity in Israel.

- For anyone who has purchased material in support of the curse theory, send the tapes back and ask for a refund.

SLIDE: BLOOD GUILT

As a brief aside, a related FALSE teaching is that a curse still rests on the Jewish people because of the crowd that contributed to Jesus' death.

Remember the scene – Pilate saw that he could not prevent a riot if he had Jesus' life spared. He took water and washed his hands and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this Just person. You see to it." And all the people answered and said, "His blood be upon us and on our children." (Matthew 27:24-25)

Some claim that this verse forever condemns the Jewish people in the eyes of God for the murder of Jesus. The Jewish crowd invoked God's curse upon themselves and their descendants until the end of time. They remain guilty of the Blood of Jesus.

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- This is a misunderstanding of Scripture and it is dangerous. It contributed to the Inquisition, the Russian pogroms, and the Holocaust. It also is a subtle foundation of today's erroneous Replacement Theology.

The truth is that EVERYONE – Jews, Irishmen, Lutherans, etc., are judged *individually*, not *corporately*, on the sole basis of their acceptance or rejection of Christ as Lord (John 3:36). The guilt for the murder of Christ was NOT passed on to all Jewish descendants of that crowd or of the scribes and Pharisees who provoked them.

- Even logically, the claim doesn't make any sense. If the Jews AS A RACE are condemned for killing Christ, then the Italian descendants of the Roman soldiers should likewise be condemned for nailing Jesus to the cross.
- If you're going to be racist, you should at least be consistent. The real reason why the Italians are NOT similarly blamed is that there is a bias against the Jewish people.

But something else occurred at the crucifixion that reveals how bogus the charge is. Remember last session when we talked about Unintentional Sin and how it was covered by the Levitical sin offering?

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<click> Jesus said on the cross: 'Father forgive them; they know not what they do.'

<click> '*They know not what they do.*' They really didn't understand Who He was and what they were doing. Jesus here labels their actions as Unintentional, and as we discussed last time, Unintentional Sin was covered by the sin offering under the Levitical system

➤ Here was the Sin Offering Himself forgiving them.

If any of us want to know who is responsible for Jesus' death, **we only have to look in the mirror.**

OK.

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ISRAEL

SLIDE: WHAT HATH GOD WROUGHT.

verse 23b: "At the proper time it must be said of Jacob and of Israel, 'What hath God wrought!'"

When Samuel Morse, who invented the single-wire telegraph system in the U.S., sent the first long-distance message in 1844, it was "What hath God wrought". He was giving credit to God. Today, someone would probably say "Look what Steve Jobs can do!" We are a generation that's turned from praising God to praising ourselves.

Now – the statement "What hast God wrought" sounds very awkward to our American ears for two reasons –

#1. Wrought is not a common word. *Wrought* is the past tense and past participle of the word "worked". It is used most often to describe the shaping, altering, and manufacture of various metals, like iron, steel, aluminum. Example: *wrought-iron fence*.

#2. The 2nd reason why it sounds strange– at least to me – is that it I would expect the sentence to be in the form of a question, not a statement. But, you will notice that the sentence does NOT end with a question mark but with an exclamation mark.

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Here, the word is used in a statement of fact, not a question. It says that people will look at Israel some day and say *in total amazement* –

“Wow, look at what God has done! Look at what He has produced by His shaping of a motley group of people into something wonderful.”

- **The people of Israel exist because of God keeps His promises – that’s a fact, Jack!**

And the same is true of us who are being transformed by Christ. *What happened to you?* I use to like you – you were such a good drinking partner and a good brawler and didn’t mind all the gambling debts. Or, ladies – such a great source of gossip, mouth like a trooper, made me laugh when you shoplifted makeup from Walmart.

- Ever see the TV show RESTAURANT IMPOSSIBLE? When people see the wonderful improvement that were made to their restaurant, the most common response is “*Oh My God! – I can’t believe it.*” That’s what people say about you.

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- Not that these improvements contribute in any way with your salvation; salvation is **wholly by grace alone**, but the Lord works miracles in your spirit and it is obvious.

A Scriptural statement of similar amazement occurs in Isaiah Chapter 66, but in the form of a question:

- “Who has ever heard of such things? Who has ever seen things like this? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment?” Isaiah 66:8

Isaiah prophesied that a Nation formed in a day. This, I believe, occurred on May 14, 1948, in Tel Aviv, when David Ben-Gurion proclaims the State of Israel, establishing the first Jewish state in 2,000 years. Against all odds – out of the land for over 1800 years yet still remaining Jewish – over 6 million killed in holocaust – and yet, here they are, back in the land as the nation of Israel recognized by the United Nations. The size of the nation was much smaller than the original Promised Land, but a homeland existed again.

Now, some people say that the OT prophesies about Israel and the land are now to be interpreted spiritually as pertaining “to the church”, not the Jewish people, as we are the spiritual

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Israel. Therefore, they say, the promises are no longer literal.
But that's an **misinformed position.**

- **There was ALWAYS a spiritual Israel – Abraham was part of spiritual Israel.** God PROMISED Abraham and his descendants certain things – some pertained to the land itself, some to the benefits of blessing and the punishment for cursing them (Balaam and Balak are witnessing this in our discussion), and some regarding their being a blessing to the whole world (the Messiah would come thru him). But, to say that all these prophecies are to be interpreted *spiritually* is ignoring the plain meaning of the text.

<SLIDE> **Jesus' Prophecy**

One of the key passages for me that demonstrates that we cannot spiritualize ALL the prophecies about Israel is a prophecy made by Jesus. When He was asked about the end times, Jesus said:

“Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and **Jerusalem will be trampled**

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underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Luke 21_23-24

The Roman army destroyed Jerusalem occurred in 70 AD, just as Jesus predicted, and many Jews were dispersed and again led away into captivity for 1900 years. This happened LITERALLY, not spiritually.

But, we can't stop reading the passage at this point and say that the *prophecy was fulfilled* in 70A.D. The 2nd half of the prophetic text was NOT fulfilled in 70 AD.

<SLIDE> "... and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

Even though the State of Israel was established in 1948, Jerusalem was a divided city with Jordan controlling of the old portion of the city. So, the city was still "trampled down by Gentiles" until ...

<click> The 1967 Arab-Israel War, when the Israelis conquered all of the city and unified its control under Jewish administration. Was this a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy that the city would be "trampled underfoot by the Gentiles (Jordan in this case) until the time of the Gentiles was fulfilled? I can't say for 100% certainty, but I think it was. I believe that both this

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prophecy and that of Isaiah have been fulfilled in the fairly recent history. And if so, Jesus said that this would signal the beginning of the end of days.

Side note: Now, as you know, I usually try to stay away from politics when giving presentations – both sides deserve some teasing. However, **IF** – and I emphasize IF – IF this event of unifying the City of Jerusalem is actually the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy, then the United States' proposal that a Palestinian/Israel peace deal should begin with a return to the pre-1967-war boundaries – where Jerusalem was separated into Jewish and Gentile control – is pure folly.

- In effect, **this would be trying to undo a fulfilled prophecy** and be a symbolic slap in the face of God – unintentionally no doubt, but unintentional sin is still a serious affront to His Holiness, as we saw last time.

OK...let's continue

God does NOT lie – what does it mean to 'Lie'?

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Let's look at the Hebrew concept of 'lying'.

SLIDE: KAZAV

The Hebrew word used in verse 19 is:

kazav: (ka-zav) to lie, be a liar.

It is translated as "lie" here in verse 19, and it has several shades of meaning that are quite informative as to the concept of prophecy.

SLIDE: 'kazav'

The word kazav is #3576 in the Hebrew section of Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. There are several meanings that it may have, the most obvious of course is to tell a deliberate falsehood. However, you will note that there is an additional INFERENCE to the word that suggests something that *fails* or *disappoints*.

Consider this passage from Isaiah where the word is used:

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SLIDE: Isaiah 58:11 says; "you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never **fail**".

The word for 'fail' here is that same word 'kazav' – now, the aspect of *intentional* deception is obviously not present in this context – for a spring or stream is not able to lie in the sense that we may intentionally lie.

- But, in another sense, a dry spring DOES lie in that it does not deliver what it advertises.

Think of those scenes in the movies where someone is dying of thirst in the desert – he sees this image of an oasis in the distance – he stumbles, crawls toward the advertised rescue but discovers that it is only a mirage. It was a false image that promised life – it was a lie. It disappoints.

It is this '*disappointing*' aspect of the word 'kazav' that I want to explore for just a moment, because we must deal with it today from the multiple prophetic ministries that abound in the church.

A false prophecy usually promises hope, and because God's Name is attached to it, we expect the promise to be fulfilled but ... it is not. It "FAILS". LIKE THE MIRAGE, IT "DISAPPOINTS" BECAUSE THE TRUTH WAS NEVER THERE.

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Now, we experience disappointing events in everyday life, and to some extent, we are not totally surprised when they happen.

- For example – you go out on a cold morning, get into your car and turn the key – and nothing happens. The battery is dead or the starter is fried. Or...
- You order a large steak based on a picture on a restaurant menu. But when it comes to the table, you realize that the menu picture showing the size of the steak must have been taken using a plate from a Barbie dollhouse; or...
- Get home from work after looking forward all day to that last piece of ice cream cake left over from your birthday; you open the freezer, pull out the box and find that it is empty – someone has eaten the cake and put the empty box back in.

Did the car “lie”? Did the menu lie? Did the box advertising an ice cream cake lie? I don't know, but they surely disappointed!

That's everyday life, and like I said, we expect that this will happen from time to time. **But, what do we do with false prophecy – a promise to which God's Name has been attached but it was a lie, a mirage?** I'll get to this in a moment.

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SLIDE: Mark 11:12-14

Remember the incident of Jesus cursing the fig tree? This lack of fruit on the tree that Jesus expected to have fruit carries with it the notion of 'kazav' – lying that causes *disappointment*. I'll read it from the Gospel of Mark:

"On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He (Jesus) became hungry. Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!"

Jewish-Christian scholar Alfred Edersheim comments on this passage that "in Palestine, the fruit appears on this tree *BEFORE* the leaves." Thus, to see a leafed fig tree (even at an unseasonable time), one might anticipate that there would be some fruit already on the tree. This tree had leaves but it was fruitless.

- Now, the Hebrew term 'kazav' is NOT actually used here in this text, but the incident illustrates the implication of the term. In a sense, the tree was lying – it advertised itself as having fruit but there was no fruit. It was a fruitless tree. Or, as Isaiah compares it with a streambed or well in the desert that didn't have water – **it failed, it disappointed, it lied.**

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- This incident was a metaphor for the nation of Israel and their faithlessness to produce God's fruit. The nation was fussy about observing the outward rules of holiness but the fruit of a contrite heart was missing. Jesus' profound disappointment was that Israel hadn't fulfilled its mandate to bless the world, and it didn't recognize Him as Messiah.
- "Disappointment, *failure to deliver* what is advertised." I find it very significant that the New Testament describes false teachers and false prophets with the **same** metaphors:

SLIDE: FALSE TEACHERS & PROPHETS

"These are hidden reefs at your love feasts... **waterless clouds**, swept along by winds; **fruitless trees** in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; ... wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved" *Jude 1:11-13*

False teachers and prophets are described as *waterless* clouds, *fruitless* trees... images we just saw in Isaiah and Mark. **They promise truth about God and from God but produce nothing but disappointment.**

Balaam: Oracle #2- God does not Lie

OK. As you know, we've been looking at the Oracles of Balaam, which are considered prophetic. The next presentation on the Book of Numbers in about a month will have an in-depth discussion about prophecy when the manner by which Balaam delivered his words transitions from being forced by God to say specific words using the help of a presidential teleprompter to the case where the Spirit of the Lord descends upon him and he speaks his own words under the Spirit's inspiration. But for our discussion today, I want to introduce my own simplified definition of what prophecy is...

<SLIDE> **MY** DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

Speaking the Truth about God or from God

I put up this admittedly *simplified* definition of mine primarily to highlight the point that prophecy ALWAYS involves telling *truthful* things. There are many **aspects or types** of prophecy: some tells us what God is saying to us about today's situation, some announce what *will* happen if behavior doesn't change, etc. – more commonly –NT prophecy usually involves telling the Truth about what God is like, what promises He has made, and the implications of the cross of Christ in our lives. The emphasis here is on the word TRUTH.

Balaam: Oracle #2- God does not Lie

Since the Holy Spirit is active today, we may expect that all the various types of prophecy will occur today – which we'll discuss next time. But since we're on the topic that God doesn't lie, disappoint or change His mind, I want to briefly tie this truth into an unfortunate redefining of the concept of prophecy today that I mentioned earlier.

The widespread but incorrect teaching which says that God **HAS** changed His mind about the required TRUTHFULNESS AND PURITY of a prophetic statement is the issue. According to the new definition, prophecy today is not required to be ENTIRELY God's word. While it may be so, ...

- Prophecy now is said to be usually a **mixture** of God's word and *human fantasy*, and it is our responsibility to separate out any pearls of truth that may be hidden in the cloudy prophetic chowder.
- Think about what this means! A prophet is allowed to mix God's word with human error. This means that the standard for a prophet today is LOWER than for the contestants on the Judge Judy show; there, they have to pledge to "tell the truth, the whole truth and **nothing** but the truth" !!!
- As bad as that is, it is truly mindboggling to me that a **FALSE** prophecy is no longer considered to be a **bad** thing **IF** it was delivered in all sincerity. Biblical standards did not regard

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sincerity as a mitigating factor; false prophecy merited punishment ranging from labeling the individual as a false prophet up to stoning him. Now, it is excused as just a simple mistake; it doesn't tarnish the prophet's reputation or prophetic ministry in the least. Try-try again, no harm-no foul, unlimited mulligans are freely allowed.

- Does it sound as if I'm exaggerating or being sarcastic? Well, I plead 'guilty' to the charge of sarcasm – which by the way the new teaching is very deserving of – but unfortunately I'm not guilty of the charge of exaggeration. This deception is the widely promoted by most of the big-named prophetic ministries.

As the Apostle John said, NO lie is of the TRUTH. Spiritual deception ALWAYS contains a **little bit** of truth; that's why God's standard for prophetic purity was so high. A little lie opens us up to *further* deception.

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Ok – before I'm chased down the road by a mob carrying torches and pitchforks, let me get to my last point.

Balaam and Balak thought they could convince God to change His mind about a promise He made to the Israelites – neither of them could comprehend that God ALWAYS keeps His promises – He does not lie nor change His mind. God's promises can be trusted.

~ My final topic in this presentation is looks at HOW we can be sure that God WILL keep all His promises.

Well, when we say the Lord's Prayer – “Our Father Who art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread...” and so on, we end the prayer with “*For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever...*” – **and then we say... AMEN.**

“Amen” – by saying that, we're saying that we believe that ALL that was said was true, that God is able to deliver ALL that He promised, and He IS in control and WILL BE forevermore.”

– *Amen, it is true, we believe it is true.*

Well, Jesus said that HE IS The Amen!

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SLIDE: Jesus The Amen

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.” Rev 3:14

In the Book of The Revelation, the Apostle John is instructed to write to the church of Laodicea: “write that these are the words of **The Amen**, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.”

- Here, Jesus calls Himself “The Amen”, the faithful and true witness.
- It's easy to read this text and skip over it the word “Amen” because it is so overused to the point where it has almost lost its meaning.

The context of the Jesus' address to the lukewarm church at Laodicea explains why He applies this title to Himself. Jesus is here calling Laodicea back to that which is represented by His Own Name and Nature. There is nothing mixed, confused or contradictory about Him. There is no falsehood within Him, and so His call is for their return to what they once possessed.

He was the ‘Amen’ to all of God's Promises to Abraham. He is the Amen to all God's promises to us.

Jesus was calling them back to their first love – Him. They fell away and no longer resembled an ‘Amen’, they more

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resembled a Perhaps, a Maybe, a Mañana. He was calling them back to complete distinctiveness, to the TRUTH, that there shall be no doubt whatever as to where they stood. It is a great thing to meet people who know exactly what they are after, with no two minds about it; they are settled; they are fixed; there is no variableness with them.

This is the meaning of 'overcoming' in the case of Laodicea. 'Overcoming' means that all uncertainty, indefiniteness, weakness, indecision, unfaithfulness, and everything of that character, is eliminated. No MIXTURE, no half-truthful prophecies. The overcomers are people who know where they stand, where they are going, – they are **people who have the shout of the King in their midst – the shout is Amen, the clear unwavering note of certainty.**

And when we say Amen, we give Glory to God. In his 2nd letter to the Corinthian church, Paul writes:

SLIDE: PROMISES

“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through Him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God.” 2 Corinthians 1:20

Paul answers the question whether we can trust God to keep all His promises? Do you want proff – Look at Jesus! Jesus is God's Amen to ALL His promises – they are “true!”

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- Do you want proof that God loves you? Look at Jesus – Who became a baby born in a manger and who died on the cross.
- Do you want proof that your sins can be forgiven? Look at Jesus Who endured the wrath of the Father against sin and said “It is finished”.
- Do you want proof that you will survive the grave? Look at Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father, the Alpha, the Omega and the Amen Who conquered the grave and said that, in Him, we also will be with Him. Jesus rose from the dead and so will we.

In a world where nothing seems sure, only God is true.

SLIDE: The Amen

– Jesus IS the final Word, our advocate, He will say of us at the final judgment, “*Father – this one is mine*” & the Father will not overrule Him.

Jesus’ Word on the issue is **final**. He is Lord, He is The Amen, He is Our Amen.

<CLICK> And, **That’s a fact Jack!**

AMEN.