

December 24, 2023

This Week: 9:30 a.m. Catechism Reading Service (LD 27)
6:30 p.m. Advent Reading Service
NO classes.

Next Week: 9:30 a.m. Catechism Reading Service (LD 28)
6:30 p.m. New Years Eve Reading Service
NO classes.

Monday: Christmas service at 6:30 p.m. with Rev. Slingerland.

Advance Notices:

- New Years service and installation of office bearers on **January 2** at 7:00 p.m. with Rev. Slingerland.
- January 10**, 7:00 p.m. Confession of Faith classes start
-All the Lord willing-

Collections: Today: 1st General Fund Next week: 1st General Fund
2nd Emeritus Fund 2nd Israel Mission

**A special collection is being held in the 3rd box. Please see note on box*

Congregational Meeting:

At the congregational meeting:

Mr. Rick Rozeboom was elected deacon.

Mr. Derek Kattenberg was elected elder.

Objections must be brought to the consistory in writing. 2nd announcement.

We Remember in Prayer:

- The call sent out to Ds. Visser to come over and help us.
- Our widows and lonely ones, prodigal sons and daughters, and all those with hidden crosses.

MEDITATIONS

CHRIST'S COMING PROPHESED BY BALAAM

"...there shall come a Star out of Jacob..." (Numbers 24:17)

Balaam is one of the most unusual people in the Bible. He was two-faced. On one hand, he coveted money so much, that contrary to God's Word and his conscience, he tried to accommodate Balak's wish to curse God's people. Balaam hated God's people. On the other hand, he spoke in a remarkable way about the happiness of Israel. On one side, he was determined to destroy Israel (just think about his advice to Balak "...to

cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." Revelation 2:14), and on the other side, he spoke in such a way about God and His people, that one would think he was a child of God. We can hear him say: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" (verse 5). Yet, to Balak he testified: "The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak." (Numbers 22:38).

It is quite remarkable that Balaam knew not only the name God, but also the name LORD. He said to Balak: "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied?" (Numbers 23:8). Besides this, Balaam even spoke about his God when he told Balak's servants: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more." Balaam, the two-faced man, could speak well with words of instruction and comfort to God's people, and at the same time he remained a stranger of the spiritual things about which he spoke. By the general working of God's Spirit, Balaam was enlightened so that people were jealous of him.

In such manner, Balaam spoke the words that a Star would come out of Jacob. It was the fourth and last proverb which he uttered. He announced himself: "Balaam the son of 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..." (Numbers 24:15,16). One could be jealous of such a man.

Who would dare to say, as this Moabite said, that he was moved by the words which God spoke to him? Many of us who hear God's Word in church each week remain indifferent. Who would dare to say with Balaam that his eyes were opened? This is quite a statement. With all the privileges bestowed on this man, he wished to die the death of God's people, yet not to live as God's people. The history of Balaam in the Bible is a warning to us to show how far a person can be lead into the mysteries of God's Word, how well one can speak of God and Christ, and yet lack the heart-renewing grace which God's Spirit works in the life of His children.

We should also note, that Balaam spoke about Christ's coming: "...there shall come a Star out of Jacob..." It is very well possible that Balaam's prophesy was handed down through the ages in the East and was known by the wise men. They went to Bethlehem and came to the manger because they had seen His Star in the East. Yet, this Bright and Morning Star, of Whom Balaam spoke so nicely, never drove the darkness of sin out of his own heart.

We are again in the Advent weeks and much is spoken and sung about this Star of Jacob. Some are so touched by the Christmas message and all that surrounds it, that they are convinced that what they feel in their hearts is the work of the Holy Spirit. Remember, Balaam was also overjoyed, yet he never entered the Kingdom of Heaven. To enter that Kingdom, we need heart-renewing grace, not some false feelings of joy.

Balaam once said that he had sinned, yet he never truly became a sinner before God. The passion of his heart to sin ruled his life. With all his joy and speaking well of God and Christ, he remained a man whose conscience was touched by God, who had deep spiritual feelings for the message of God, but who was never touched in his heart by God. He prophesied beautifully about the Star of Jacob. However, because he never recognized the darkness in his own heart and life, the brightness of the Star never shone in his heart. He remained in darkness forever. A lesson with a serious warning for all of us. -Rev. A. Moerkerken

God with us

'Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' Isaiah 7:14

As fallen creatures, God is against us and we are against him. But in the Messiah he is reconciled—God with us. He is God in our nature still. He suffered as a man, and as a man he now reigns on the throne of glory, exercises all power and receives all spiritual worship both in heaven and upon earth. He is the head of principalities and powers, thrones and dominions, and has a name above every name [Philippians 2:9]. Thus man is not only saved but enabled, brought into the nearest relation to him that sitteth upon the throne, and can say, He is our Lord, our Shepherd, our Savior, our Friend, Emmanuel, God with us.

What a cold assent is paid to this doctrine by many who profess to receive it as a truth! What a strong foundation for the faith and hope of those who have put their trust in him. How awful the state of those who reject him and say in their hearts, We will not have this man to reign over us [Luke 19:14]. He is now manifested as a Savior—hereafter he will appear as a Judge. Embrace his golden scepter, lest you are broken by his rod of iron!

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:29-31)

*Sweeter sounds than music knows
Charm me, in Emmanuel's name;
All her hopes my spirit owes
To his birth, and cross, and shame.*

*When he came the angels sung
'Glory be to God on high'
Lord, unloose my stammering tongue,
Who should louder sing than I?*

*Did the Lord a man become
That he might the law fulfil,
Bleed and suffer in my room,
And canst thou, my tongue, be still? ~John Newton*

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CONGREGATION

Sioux Falls, SD



*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth
peace, good will toward men.*

Luke 2:14

Church Times: 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 or 6:30 p.m.