

Messiah in the Books of Moses: Lesson 6 – Numbers 24

NOTES: The Introduction

The promise of Messiah progressively unfolds throughout the Old Testament. *Messiah* became the proper name associated with the promised Anointed One of Yahweh Who would come to deliver, redeem, and restore Israel. Since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, God has kept the hope of His people alive through the promise of Messiah. The Hebrew term *Mashiach* (מָשִׁיחַ) literally translates *Anointed One*. The Greek equivalent of *Mashiach/Messiah* appearing in the New Testament is *Christos* (χριστός). Each time the word *Christ* appears in the New Testament, it is a reference to the office of Jesus as the Messiah.

In the study of *Messiah in the Books of Moses*, six Old Testament prophetic predictions will be explored: *The Edenic Prediction* (Gen. 3:15); *The Noahic Prediction* (Gen 9:25-27); *The Abrahamic Prediction* (Gen 12:1-3); *The Judaic Prediction* (Gen 49:8-12); *The Balaamic Prediction* (Num 24:15-19); and, *The Mosaic Prediction* (Deut 18:15, 18). Each prophecy will be studied within its historical context and in light of its fulfillment in the Person and work of Messiah Jesus as recorded in the New Testament.

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples, opening their minds to understand all that was written concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. “Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27). A study of Luke 24 introduces *Messiah in the Books of Moses*, establishing the primary importance of studying messianic prophecy in the Old Testament. This study focuses on the first six predictions of Messiah in the Pentateuch.

Genesis 3 – The Edenic Prediction (Gen 3:15): Humanity of Messiah

Genesis 3 records the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. Before casting the man and the woman from the garden of Eden, God gives the woman a promise that includes the first predictive prophecy of Messiah in the Bible. Genesis 3:15 has commonly been called the *protoevangelium* (“the first gospel”) because it is the first prophecy in the Bible, revealing the promise of a future Redeemer Who will crush the head of Satan.

Genesis 3:15 is the “mother prophecy” that launches the promise of redemption for fallen humanity through the Messiah Who is the “seed/offspring” of the woman. The Edenic Prediction establishes the humanity of Messiah, the promised “seed/offspring” Who becomes the central figure of God’s unfolding kingdom plan.

Genesis 9 – The Noahic Prediction (Gen 9:25–27): Divinity of Messiah

Based on the genealogies in Genesis 5, at least 1500 years pass between creation and the great flood in the days of Noah. With the assumption that the seven days of creation took place around 6000 BC, some biblical scholars tentatively propose, and evidence supports, 3800 BC as the estimated time of the flood.

In the millenniums that follow the entrance of sin into the world through Adam and Eve, wickedness multiplies exponentially until the whole earth becomes corrupt in God’s eyes. “God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth” (Gen 6:12). Genesis 6–9 records God’s execution of judgment on the earth by a flood that destroys all living things except for Noah, his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, their wives, and the animals God preserved on the ark.

When Noah and his household disembark after the flood waters receded, God blesses them and commands them to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1). Genesis 9 records the sin of Ham, Noah’s son, against his father, resulting in the blessing of Shem and Japheth, and in the cursing of Canaan, the son of Ham. Within this prophetic passage of blessing and cursing, the second prediction of Messiah occurs in Genesis 9:25-27, predicting God’s dwelling in the tents of Shem.

As Genesis 3:15 establishes the humanity of Messiah, Genesis 9:25-27 establishes the divinity of Messiah. The human and divine converge for the first time in the advent of Messiah Jesus, the unique God-Man, the Word of God Who became flesh and made His dwelling among humanity (cf John 1:1-18).

Genesis 12 – The Abrahamic Prediction (Gen 12:1-3): Seed of Blessing

From among the *Shemitic* or *Semitic* people, who are descendants of Noah’s son Shem with whom God had promised to dwell (Gen 9:27), Yahweh selects a single man, Abram, from whom Messiah would descend. Yahweh calls Abram to depart from his native country and to go to a land that Yahweh would show him. Abram then goes out of Ur with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot to go to the land of Canaan.

Messiah in the Books of Moses: Lesson 6 – Numbers 24

When Yahweh calls Abram to the land of Canaan, He enters into an everlasting, unconditional covenant that initially included seven promises (Gen 12:2-3): (1) “I will make you a great nation” (2) “I will bless you” (3) “make your name great” (4) “you shall be a blessing” (5) “I will bless those who bless you” (6) “the one who curses you I will curse” (7) “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” After Abram’s arrival in the land of Canaan, Yahweh changes Abram’s name to Abraham, and He covenants an eighth everlasting promise: (8) “I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Gen 17:8).

The Abrahamic Prediction of Messiah occurs in one of the initial seven promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. Genesis 12:3, “And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” The pronoun “you” is a singular masculine pronoun that refers to Abraham, representative of his collective offspring through Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the covenant, who carried the Seed in whom all families of the earth would be blessed.

The apostle Paul explains, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations will be blessed in You’” (Gal 3:8). The loins of Abraham carried the human seed of the divine Messiah through Whom salvation comes to bless all nations.

Genesis 49 – The Judaic Prediction (Gen 49:8-12): Messiah of Tribe of Judah

Yahweh establishes His covenant with Abraham that includes eight promises of blessing to Abraham and his descendants, including the promise of Messiah in his seed through whom all nations would be blessed. Yahweh then promises to give a son to Abraham and to barren Sarah in their old age. Abraham questions Yahweh about bearing a child in their old age and proposes that He bless Ishmael instead. “But God said, ‘No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him’” (Gen 17:19-20).

When Abraham was 100 years old (ca. 2065 BC), Isaac was born and established as the heir of Yahweh’s covenant. Isaac and his barren wife Rebekah bear twin boys. Before their birth (ca. 2005 BC), Yahweh tells Rebekah that her older son (Esau) will serve the younger son (Jacob). Esau later sells his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup, and Jacob tricks his father to bless him in place of Esau. Yahweh establishes His covenant with Jacob as heir of His promises to Abraham. Jacob’s name is changed to Israel (Gen 32:28).

Jacob/Israel bears twelve sons with his wives Leah and Rachel and their concubines Zilpah and Bilhah. The names of Jacob’s twelve sons are – (of Leah): Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; (of Rachel): Joseph and Benjamin; (of Bilhah, Rachel’s maid): Dan and Naphtali; and (of Zilpah, Leah’s maid): Gad and Asher. Before his death, Jacob/Israel gathers his twelve sons to tell them “what will befall you in the days to come” (Gen 49:1). Jacob/Israel speaks a prophetic message to each of his twelve sons.

Each son would become a tribe, and the twelve tribes become the nation of Israel, the nation which God first covenanted with Abraham to make great (Gen 12:2). Israel is the nation created to carry the human seed of Messiah. In Genesis 49, Jacob prophetically reveals the kingdom destiny of each tribe. The royal tribe chosen by God to carry the seed of Messiah is Judah (Gen 49:8-12). Judah is granted the right to rule over Israel as kings until the coming of Messiah, the One to Whom the kingdom of God belongs forever.

Numbers 24 – The Balaamic Prediction (Num 24:15-19): Signs of the Conquering Messiah

The seventy-person household of Jacob leaves Canaan because of a great famine and goes down to Egypt in 1876 BC. While living in Egypt for 430 years, 400 of those years in bitter bondage, the family of Jacob becomes a great nation. In 1446 BC, God delivers His people through the leadership of Moses.

On their way from Egypt back into the Promise Land, the Israelites fail to trust God at the border city of Kadesh-Barnea when He commands them to “go up and possess the land which I have given you” (Deut 9:23). As a result, God judges that generation to wander in the desert for forty years. Only Joshua and Caleb, the two spies who had brought back a good report of the land and urged Israel to trust God, would be allowed to enter the Promise Land. All of the other Israelites who stalled at the border of Canaan for fear of the large, fierce people living in their land die during the nation’s forty years of desert wandering.

Messiah in the Books of Moses: Lesson 6 – Numbers 24

In the fortieth year of their desert wandering (1406 BC), for what would only have been an eleven-day journey from Mount Sinai to the Promise Land, the nation of Israel arrives on the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan opposite Jericho in preparation for entering back into Canaan for the first time in 470 years.

Balak, the king of Moab, hires the prophet Balaam to curse the nation that had crossed into his territorial boundaries. But God restrains Balaam because His blessed covenant-people could not be cursed. Yet because of Balak's promise of riches, the prophet Balaam attempts to thwart God and cast a spell on Israel.

Three times, Balaam attempts to curse Israel, but actually speaks oracles of blessing. On his fourth attempt, Balaam is overcome by the Spirit of God to prophetically reveal the coming of Messiah Who would arise from Israel to gain victory over all of the nation's enemies. Balaam reveals the symbols of the reign of this "ruler" are a "star" and "scepter." The fulfillment of this conquering King awaits Messiah's second advent.

BIBLE TEXT: Numbers 24

Num. 24:1 When Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times to seek omens but he set his face toward the wilderness. **2** And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe; and the Spirit of God came upon him. **3** He took up his discourse and said,

- 4 **"The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened;
The oracle of him who hears the words of God,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered,
How fair are your tents, O Jacob,
Your dwellings, O Israel!**
- 6 **"Like valleys that stretch out,
Like gardens beside the river,
Like aloes planted by the LORD,
Like cedars beside the waters.**
- 7 **"Water will flow from his buckets,
And his seed will be by many waters,
And his king shall be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted.**
- 8 **"God brings him out of Egypt,
He is for him like the horns of the wild ox.
He will devour the nations who are his adversaries,
And will crush their bones in pieces,
And shatter them with his arrows.**
- 9 **"He couches, he lies down as a lion,
And as a lion, who dares rouse him?
Blessed is everyone who blesses you,
And cursed is everyone who curses you."**

Num. 24:10 Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have persisted in blessing them these three times! **11** "Therefore, flee to your place now. I said I would honor you greatly, but behold, the LORD has held you back from honor." **12** Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not tell your messengers whom you had sent to me, saying, **13** 'Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything contrary to the command of the LORD, either good or bad, of my own accord. What the LORD speaks, that I will speak'? **14** "And now, behold, I am going to my people; come, and I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the days to come."

- Num. 24:15** He took up his discourse and said,
- 16 **"The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,
The oracle of him who hears the words of God,
And knows the knowledge of the Most High,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered.**

**Messiah in the Books of Moses:
Lesson 6 – Numbers 24**

- 17 “I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near;
A star shall come forth from Jacob,
A scepter shall rise from Israel,
And shall crush through the forehead of Moab,
And tear down all the sons of Sheth.
- 18 “Edom shall be a possession,
Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession,
While Israel performs valiantly.
- 19 “One from Jacob shall have dominion,
And will destroy the remnant from the city.”
- Num. 24:20 And he looked at Amalek and took up his discourse and said,
“Amalek was the first of the nations,
But his end shall be destruction.”
- Num. 24:21 And he looked at the Kenite, and took up his discourse and said,
“Your dwelling place is enduring,
And your nest is set in the cliff.
- 22 “Nevertheless Kain will be consumed;
How long will Asshur keep you captive?”
- Num. 24:23 Then he took up his discourse and said,
“Alas, who can live except God has ordained it?
- 24 “But ships shall come from the coast of Kittim,
And they shall afflict Asshur and will afflict Eber;
So they also will come to destruction.”
- Num. 24:25 Then Balaam arose and departed and returned to his place, and Balak also went his way.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. After two attempts to curse Israel but actually blessing them (23:4-25), what does the prophet Balaam do after realizing that it is pleasing to the LORD to bless Israel? (24:1)
2. What comes upon Balaam when he sees Israel camping tribe by tribe in the plains of Moab? (24:2)
3. List seven attributes of the Spirit of the LORD from Isaiah 11:2.
(1)
(2)
(3)
(4)
(5)
(6)
(7)

(A) What spiritual gifts has God given to you to serve Him in the power of the Holy Spirit? (cf. Rom 12:4-8; 1Cor 12:4-11; Eph 4:11; 1Pet 4:10-11)
4. List five descriptive phrases of the prophet Balaam in the opening of his 3rd discourse (24:3-4)
(1)
(2)
(3)
(4)
(5)
5. To what are Jacob’s tents and Israel’s dwellings likened? (24:5-6)
6. What will flow from his buckets? Where will his seed be? Describe Israel’s king and his kingdom. (24:7)

**Messiah in the Books of Moses:
Lesson 6 – Numbers 24**

7. From where does God bring Israel's king? To what is God's relationship to him likened? What will he do to the nations who are his adversaries? (24:8)
- (A) Describe your relationship with God. From what has God rescued you?
8. Describe the ways that he is like a lion. Who is blessed? Who is cursed? (24:9) (C) How is this similar to Messiah's description in Genesis 49:9?
9. Why does the anger of Balak, king of Moab, burn against the prophet Balaam? (24:10) What does Balak tell Balaam to do? Why does Balak say that he will not honor Balaam? (24:11)
10. What had Balaam previously told Balak's messengers about his ability to do anything contrary to the command of the LORD, either good or bad, of his own accord? (24:12-13) About what does Balaam say that he will now advise Balak before he returns to his people? (24:14)
11. **(P) Prophecy: (Balaamic Prediction – Num 24:15-19)**
List six descriptive phrases of the prophet Balaam in the opening of his 4th discourse (24:15-16)
- (1)
 - (2)
 - (3)
 - (4)
 - (5)
 - (6)
12. **(P) Prophecy: (Balaamic Prediction – Num 24:15-19)**
How does Balaam describe the one he sees? What will come forth from Jacob? What will rise from Israel? What will he crush? What will he tear down? (24:17)
- (OB) What does this reveal about Messiah Jesus? (Try to use verses outside of this passage to show how this is realized in the Person/work of Jesus.)
13. **(P) Prophecy: (Balaamic Prediction – Num 24:15-19)**
Who will be a possession? Who will be its enemies? Who will perform valiantly? (24:18) Who will have dominion? What will he destroy? (24:19)
- (OB) What does this reveal about Messiah Jesus? (Try to use verses outside of this passage to show how this is realized in the Person/work of Jesus.)
14. What does he say about Amalek in his discourse? (24:20)
15. What does he say about the Kenite, Kain, and Asshur? (24:21-22)
16. Who does Balaam say can live? (24:23) From where will ships come? Who will they afflict? What will happen to them? (24:24)
17. Where do Balaam and Balak go? (24:25)
18. What do you learn about God in Num 24? What do you learn about Messiah in Num 24:15-19? How could these truths transform your life?

Write a prayer response to Num 24.