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The Last Test (Nu 33:50-53)

*"I shut my eyes in order to see!"* This was a quote left by French artist, Paul Gauguin. Gauguin was better able to attain more unimaginable colors and touches of humanity in his works when his eyes were closed rather than open. Likewise, in our walk of faith, we must be able to close out all aspects of the visual world in order to see the spiritual world. If we are unable to differentiate between what is priority and what is not, we end up passing the time forgetting why we must have faith and how we need to live.

In Gen 3, there is a scene where Eve was tempted in the Garden of Eden, and in Num 25, we can observe the Israelites being tested in the plains of Moab. In the Garden of Eden, Eve was tempted by the serpent, and in Moab, Balaam and Balak were presented to be as cunning as the serpent. The specialty of serpents is swallowing in one bite and destroying in a single stroke. As we reveal the meanings of the names Balaam and Balak, we can see that they withhold the qualities of a serpent.

*Balaam* means *"devourer"*, and *Balak* means *"devastator"* and both clearly show the characteristics of a serpent. Just as Eve was unable to overcome the trial of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, the Israelites were unable to overcome the temptations of Moab. Though each of these events occurred at different points in time (4,114 BC and 1,406 BC respectively), the contents of the temptation were the same. To this very day, this temptation has not ended, and will continue to exist until the end of time.

The temptation of the serpent is to lead man to sin and away from God. The temptation has three qualities which make it so desirable: (1) It is pleasing (*appealing*) to the eye, (2) it is good for food (*appetizing*), and (3) it is something you *must* have (*desirable*). Let's read Gen 3:6. *"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it."* Though we know these temptations cause us to fall away from faith, it is difficult to resist as they entice us to want to eat it, to look at it, and to desire it.

These three things in one word is *greed*. As Jas 1:15 tells us that *"after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown gives birth to death,"* being unable to overcome our temptations will lead to becoming captives to greed. Just like Eve, the Israelites were unable to overcome *that* very test. So when exactly were the Israelites tested? It was right when their 40 years of walking in the wilderness was coming to an end, right before they entered the Promised Land, before crossing the Jordan river, where they had set up their 41st camp.

This place was just 7 miles outside of Canaan, in the plains of Moab. All they had to do was cross the Jordan river to be in the land where milk and honey would flow as God had promised. But, see how Satan tempted the Israelites to the very last moment. Balak, the king of Moab, offered Balaam who was a very famous prophet at the time, to curse Israel by giving him an offer he could not refuse. Though on the outside Balaam

did not respond to Balak's once in a lifetime proposal, inside, he had already accepted the offer. With that, Balaam led the Israelites to corruption.

This story can be found in Num 22-24. Balaam did not directly lead the Israelites to sin, but rather taught Balak an ingenious way to entice them. This can be found in Rev 2:14, and the results of it can be found in Num 25. The Israelites sinned by engaging in immoral sexual acts with the Moabite women. This led to shocking events as God put His curse upon them. You know, it was not the serpent who led man to fall in Eden but it was man himself who let himself astray thru greed in the name of temptation.

This was exactly what Balaam and Balak did to Israel. Balaam and Balak came forth like the serpent. Balaam and Balak fought with the Israelites, but not using swords and spears. They fought the Israelites by causing them to sin by their own will thru an invitation to a festival of greed. *The temptation set out by Moab included the most beautiful women of Moab, the best-tasting foods, and the idol Baal which promised abundance.* This was just like the temptation presented to Eve in the Garden of Eden. The temptation of greed which was pleasing to the eye, good for food, and desirable.

Beloved friends, in the wilderness, there is nothing that is good for food, pleasing to the eye, or irresistibly desirable. Knowing this, Satan aimed his temptation to take advantage of this in his challenge to Israel before crossing the Jordan River. Moab was Israelite's 41st camp in the wilderness. *Moab means "from the father"*. It is the place where you figure out who your father is. Just as the Israelites set up camp 42 times in the wilderness, the Lord came to this earth 42 generations from Abraham. This was not a coincidence, but rather a prophecy!

The way to overcome the last test is to worship in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:24)! We shall overcome through the word and through prayer! Reject greed and sinful desires (1 Jn 2:15-17)! It may look like the light, the smooth shortcut, but if it is not done through faith, it is all fake. We must pass the last test. That is how we are transformed. The trumpet is a test and we must overcome that test. The last trumpet is the last test and we must overcome it so the world of transformation and transfiguration can be realized.

God has given us eyes that can see eternity (Ecc 3:11). These are the eyes of our heart (Eph 1:18). These are the eyes that we meet our eternal God with. We must close our earthly eyes to open up the eyes of our spirit. Satan tempts us to prevent us from being transformed, but we can overcome it for God loves us so much that he sent us his One and Only Son (Jn 3:16). Have a faith strong enough to overcome even the last test (Rom 8:37)!