

TODAY'S WORSHIP NOTES

What is the church season or special day? _____

What is the color of the altar cloths today? (circle one)

- | | |
|---|--|
| White perfection, joy, purity | Black absence of color; symbolic of death |
| Blue hope | Green life, nourishment |
| Purple royalty, mourning, repentance | Gold royalty, riches, victory |
| Red fire, fervor, blood, martyrdom, victory in the blood of Christ | |

How does the color of the day fit the theme of the day? _____

What led our singing today? video organ piano other

Did we have special music today? choir soloist guest musicians

Did we have a sacrament today?

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Communion? | Baptism? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

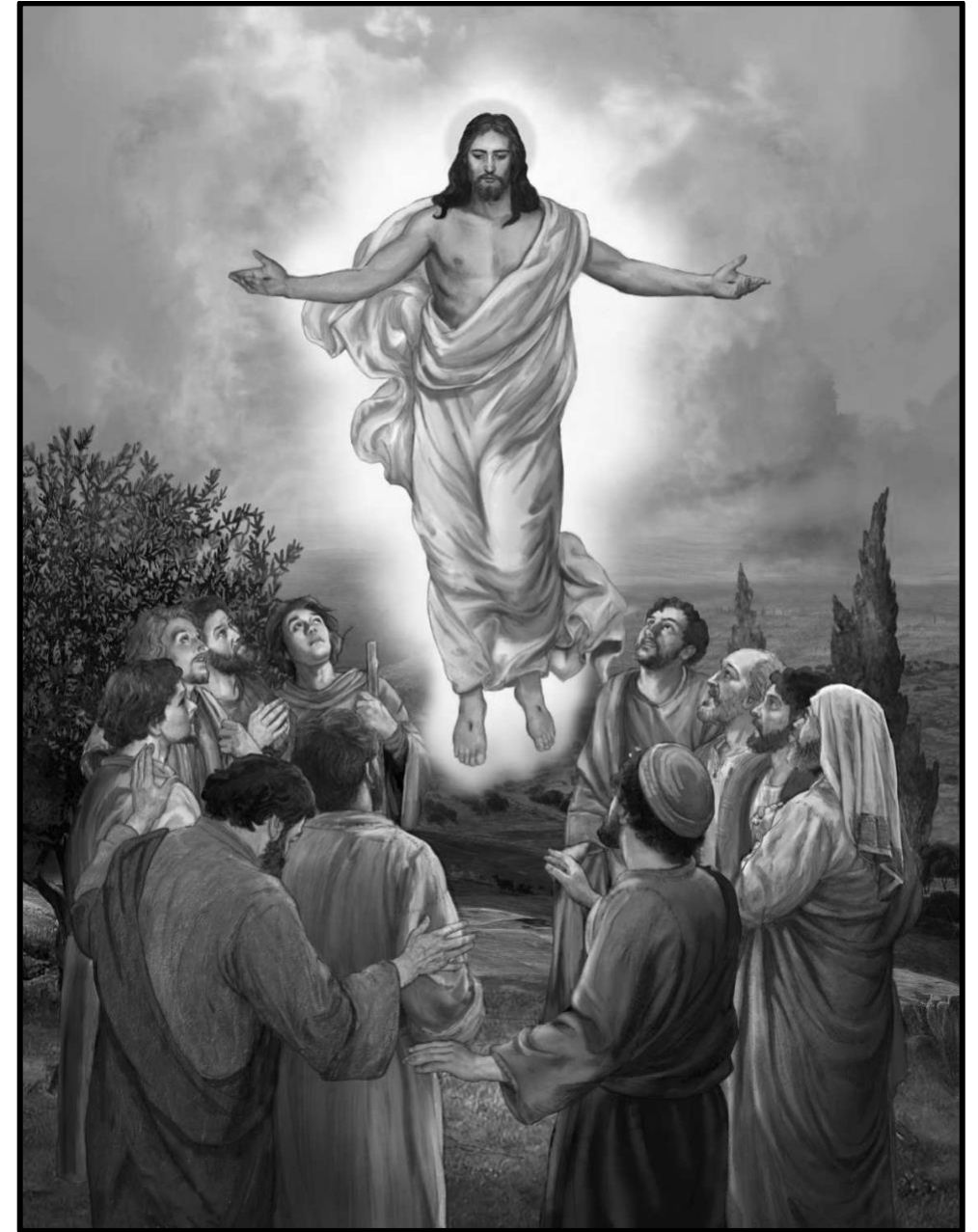
The sermon text is: _____, found in Old Testament New Testament

What did I learn today about God, myself, or my Christian faith? _____

What was my favorite song today? _____

Did we do something special or out of the ordinary in worship today? _____

I would like to ask pastor this question (in person, text or email!): _____



Ascension Lutheran Church

May 12, 2024

Welcome to worship today at Ascension!

MORNING PRAISE

Today's central thought for worship:

Jesus' disciples worried about his upcoming departure. They would lose visible contact with their caring Shepherd, the vine who sustains and empowers them, the friend who lays down his life for them - all these blessed relationships we have been considering in the last half of the Easter season. Jesus reassured them that it is better if he goes away. It means that he can send them the Spirit, the Advocate, who will empower them for their work. The Holy Spirit can enable them to understand and accurately remember what Jesus taught them. That Holy Spirit will fill their own testimony and convince their listeners of the truth. This Sunday as we celebrate Ascension Day we celebrate Jesus' departure to his Father and his enthronement as the Son of God at his Father's right hand. From that throne in heaven he sends the gifts we need to spread the gospel throughout the world. Jesus clarified what he wants us to be doing: witnessing to the good news about him as the Spirit reveals it to us in the written Word. He wants us to make disciples for him by baptizing in the name of the Triune God and teaching his Word. As we do that, the Holy Spirit he sent will work in human hearts! May the Spirit whom Jesus sent work in our hearts today!

Our order of service today is "Morning Praise." This order of service is based on the historic Matins service used at the beginning of the day. It is from our new hymnal and is an alternate version of Morning Praise. It has been modified to express the theme of our service today. Joined to Christ, our risen Lord, we glorify God as we rise to the activities of this new day. Scripture readings are from the Evangelical Heritage Version. Liturgy, hymns that are not in the public domain as well as our Psalm of the Day are reprinted here under OneLicense #A-713900. Children's activity pages used by permission (paid subscription).

Would you like to know more about Ascension Lutheran Church? Please contact Pastor Dan Simons at revdsimons@gmail.com. Phone or text: 586-569-9895. Visit us at www.ascensionmacomb.com or you can also like us on Facebook at facebook.com/ALCmacomb.

Need to connect to Wi-Fi here at church?

Our Wi-Fi name is ASCENSION Guest. Password is macombwels. Please be sure your phone is on silent.

Thanks to those who serve us today

Worship accompanist - Gloria Aita; Recording/Streaming Engineer - Sandy Borkowski; Security - Paul Fuller; Worship Leader /Preacher - Pastor Dan Simons.

OPENING HYMN..... 680 Baptized into Your Name Most Holy



1 Bap-tized in - to your name most ho - ly, O Fa - ther, Son, and
2 My lov - ing Fa - ther, there you took me to be hence-forth your
3 My faith-ful God, you fail me nev - er; your prom-ise sure - ly
4 All that I am and love most dear-ly— re - ceive it all, O



Ho - ly Ghost, I claim a place, though weak and low - ly,
child and heir. My faith - ful Sav - ior, there you let me
will en - dure. O cast me not a - way for - ev - er
Lord, from me. Let me con - fess my faith sin - cere - ly;



a - mong your saints, your cho - sen host. Bur - ied with Christ and
the fruit of all your sor - rows share. O Ho - ly Spir - it,
if words and deeds be - come im - pure. Have mer - cy when I
help me your faith - ful child to be! Let noth - ing that I



dead to sin, your Spir - it now shall live with - in.
com - fort me when threat-'ning clouds a - round I see.
come de - filed; for - give, lift up, re - store your child.
am or own serve an - y will but yours a - lone.

Text: tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, alt.; Johann J. Rambach, 1693-1735, abr.
Tune: Cornelius H. Dretzel, 1697-1775
Text and tune: Public domain

**THE BAPTISM OF
COOPER JAMES VANSICE
SON OF ABRAHAM AND LEAH VANSICE
BORN APRIL 17, 2024**



OPENING SENTENCES

Ephesians 1, Selected Verses

- M:** I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know the hope to which he has called you, just how rich his glorious inheritance among the saints is, and just how surpassingly great his power is for us who believe.
- C:** **It is as great as the working of his mighty strength, which God worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and above every name that is given, not only in this age but also in the one to come.**
- M:** God also placed all things under his feet and made him head over everything for the church.
- C:** **The church is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.**

Come, O Come, Let Us Sing to the Lord

Refrain

Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,
let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;
come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,
come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.

1 You are a great and a won - drous God,
2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,
cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.
kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.

You made the hills and the moun - tains high,
You are the God whom we call our own,
you made the seas and the dry land. *Refrain*
we are the flock that you shep - herd. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

M: Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, King of glory, you ascended far above the heavens and at God's right hand you rule the nations. Leave us not alone, we pray, but grant us the Spirit of truth that at your command and by your power we may be your witnesses in all the world; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Be seated

FIRST LESSON..... Acts 1:1-11

Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to the apostles and commissions them as his messengers. We see Jesus go to heaven visibly and we hear the comforting message of the angels that he will come again in the same way.

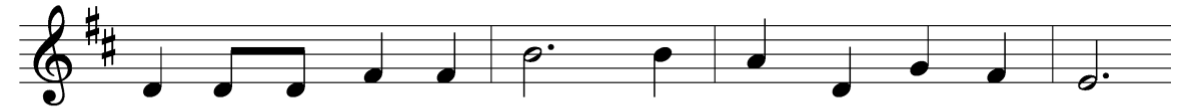
I wrote my first book, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began doing and teaching ²until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After he had suffered, he presented himself alive to the apostles with many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and told them things about the kingdom of God. ⁴Once, when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for what the Father promised, which you heard from me. ⁵For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶So when they were together with him, they asked, "Lord, is this the time when you are going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹After he said these things, he was taken up while they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰They were looking intently into the sky as he went away. Suddenly, two men in white clothes stood beside them. ¹¹They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking up into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

PSALM OF THE DAY.....Psalm 47D



1 All peo - ples, clap your hands, and shout with joy and sing.
2 God has gone up on high, with shout and trum - pet voice;
3 No - bles from all the earth are joined with A - bram's seed;



The LORD Most High is to be feared; he is the earth's great King.
sing praise to God, our glo - rious King, sing praise to him, re - joice!
the rul - ers of the world are God's; he's lift - ed high in - deed!



He brings the na - tions down, sub - dues them in our sight;
For God is King of all. Sing praise with all your skill;
So to the Fa - ther raise, with his as - cend - ed Son,



he choos - es our in - her - it - ance; his love is Ja - cob's might.
he sits up - on his ho - ly throne and rules the na - tions still.
and Ho - ly Spir - it end - less praise, e - ter - nal Three in One.

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Tune: George J. Elvey
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SECOND LESSON.....Ephesians 4:7-16

Paul explains the power and purpose of the ascension for our lives. Jesus left this world for our good. He ascended so that he could give gifts to his people. He gave each of us grace according to his measure. He sends works to equip us and build us up. He strengthens us so that we are not deceived but can stand firm and grow. In all he does, Jesus has our best interest in mind. His ascension proves it.

But to each one of us grace was given, according to the measure of the gift from Christ. ⁸That is why it says, "When he ascended on high, he took captivity captive and gave gifts to his people." ⁹Now what does it mean when it says "he ascended," other than that he also had descended to the lower parts, namely, the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things. ¹¹He himself gave the apostles, as well as the prophets, as well as the evangelists, as well as the pastors and teachers, ¹²for the purpose of training the saints for the work of serving, in order to build up the body of Christ. ¹³This is to continue until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, resulting in a mature man with a stature reaching to the measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴The goal is that we would no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, when people use tricks and invent clever ways to lead us astray. ¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we would in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head. ¹⁶From him the whole body, being joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows in accordance with Christ's activity when he measured out each individual part. He causes the growth of the body so that it builds itself up in love.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE – After stanza 2, we will pause our hymn and children are invited to the chancel steps for a Children's Message: "We have a great story to tell!"



HYMN.....742:1-3 On Galilee's High Mountain

1 On Gal - i - lee's high moun - tain Christ gave the great com -
 2 The Lord, who, born of Mar - y, came down as man and
 3 His strength with - in my weak - ness will make me bold to

mand in words of strength and prom - ise which
 died, who preached to all who lis - tened, for
 say how his re - deem - ing pow - er trans -

all can un - der - stand: "All pow'r to me is
 us was cru - ci - fied. This Lord, our liv - ing
 forms my stub - born clay. His touch of fire ig -

giv - en to do what I shall choose; there -
 broth - er, in pow'r at God's right hand has
 nites me, with cour - age I am sent, my

fore I send my chil - dren, their wit - ness I will use."
 cho - sen us to car - ry his truth to ev - 'ry land.
 tongue-tied si - lence bro - ken, with grace made el - o - quent.

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 Tune: Lowell Mason, 1792-1872
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SERMON.....Luke 24:44-53

He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.”

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He said to them, “This is what is written and so it must be: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ Look, I am sending you what my Father promised. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰ He led them out as far as the vicinity of Bethany. He lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ And while he was blessing them, he parted from them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵² So they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ They were continually in the temple courts, praising and blessing God. Amen.

HYMN..... 524 Rejoice, the Lord Is King



1 Re - joice, the Lord is King! Your Lord and King a - dore!
2 The Lord, our Sav - ior, reigns, the God of truth and love;
3 His king - dom can - not fail, he rules o'er earth and heav'n;
4 Re - joice in glo - rious hope! Our Lord and judge shall come



Re - joice, give thanks and sing, and tri - umph ev - er - more:
when he had purged our stains, he took his seat a - bove:
the keys of death and hell are to our Je - sus giv'n:
and take his ser - vants up to their e - ter - nal home:



Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Re-joyce, a-gain I say, re - joice!
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Re-joyce, a-gain I say, re - joice!
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Re-joyce, a-gain I say, re - joice!
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Re-joyce, a-gain I say, re - joice!

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707–1788, alt.
Tune: John Darwall, 1731–1789
Text and tune: Public domain

OFFERING

We consider it our privilege to honor God with gifts that support the ministry of the Word among us and around the world. It is a way “translating” our time, skills, energy, and priorities into a thank-offering to God who gives us such blessings.

HYMN.....752 Gracious God, You Send Great Blessings



1 Gra - cious God, you send great bless - ings new each
3 In his earth - ly life, our Sav - ior knew the
4 Heav'n - ly Fa - ther, may our car - ing bear the

morn - ing all our days. For your mer - cies
care of faith - ful friends; may our deeds of
im - print of your grace; with the Son and

nev - er end - ing, for your love we of - fer praise.
ded - i - ca - tion of - fer love that nev - er ends.
Ho - ly Spir - it, praise be yours in ev - 'ry place!

Refrain

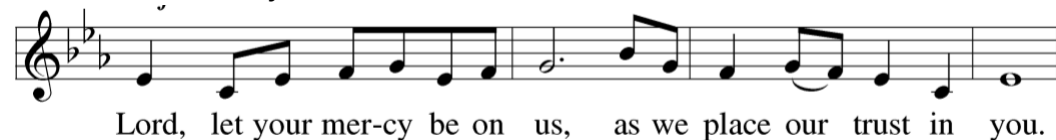
Lord, we pray that we, your peo - ple who your
gifts un - num - bered claim, through the shar - ing
of your bless - ings may bring glo - ry to your name.

Text: Gregory J. Wismar, b. 1946; Tune: ed. William Moore; Columbian Harmony, Cincinnati, 1825; Text: © 2004 Gregory J. Wismar. Used by permission: OneLicense no. A-713900; Tune: Public domain

Stand

LORD, HAVE MERCY

M: In the morning, O Lord, I call to you; in your mercy, open your hand and fill our needs this day.



Lord, let your mer - cy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

LORD'S PRAYER and PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

C: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

PRAYER FOR GRACE

M: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

M: Let us praise the Lord.



Thanks be to God.

BLESSING

M: The grace of our Lord (+) Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: **Amen**

Be seated

CLOSING HMN.....476 On Christ's Ascension I Now Build



1 On Christ's as - cen - sion I now build the hope of my as -
2 Since Christ re - turned to claim his throne, great gifts for me ob -
3 O grant, dear Lord, this grace to me, re - call - ing your as -



cen - sion. This hope a - lone has al - ways stilled all doubt and ap - pre -
tain - ing, my heart will rest in him a - lone, no oth - er rest re -
cen - sion, that I may serve you faith - ful - ly, in thanks for my re -



hen - sion, for where the head is, there as well I know his
main - ing, for where my trea - sure went be - fore, there all my
demp - tion; and then, when all my days will cease, let me de -



mem - bers are to dwell when Christ shall come and call them.
thoughts will ev - er soar to still their deep - est yearn - ing.
part in joy and peace in an - swer to my plead - ing.

Text: tr. William M. Czamanske, 1873-1964, alt.; Josua Wegelin, 1604-1640; Tune: Etlich Cristlich lider, Wittenberg, 1524; Text: © 1941 Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. A-713900; Tune: Public domain

LAST WEEK AT ASCENSION

Ascension members in God's house for worship - 44
Repeat visitors in God's house for worship - 9
First-time visitors in God's house for worship - 0
Worshipped with us online - 4
Total - 57

At the Lord's Table for Holy Communion - 41

40 stayed for the special cong. mtng.
Children in Christlight for Kids - 6
children, 3 teachers

Faith conversations and invitations
to worship by Ascension people: 6
Ascension people in touch with each
(planning, encouraging, etc.): 17

COMING UP AT ASCENSION

SUNDAY 5/12 -The Ascension of Our Lord/ Mother's Day

9:30 a.m. - Worship with Children's Message; Holy Baptism of Cooper James VanSice, infant son of Abe and Leah VanSice. (Cooper's grandfather, Rev. Karl Schmugge of MLS, Saginaw, will officiate at his baptism.)

10:30 a.m. - Greet, Meet, and Eat

10:45 a.m. - Christlight for Kids: Mary Anoints Jesus

10:45 a.m. - "Stories They Probably Didn't Teach You in Sunday School" - God Speaks through A Not-so-dumb Ass (that is, donkey).

12:00 p.m. - Confirmands meet for Confirmation rehearsal and essay help.

MONDAY 5/13 7:00 p.m. - Alcoholics Anonymous meets at Ascension

TUESDAY 5/14 7:00 p.m.- The Chosen Watch Party & Discussion, S1, Ep. 7

SUNDAY 5/19 -Confirmation Sunday at Ascension: Charlotte Ciaramitaro and Nathan Fortuna will be confirmed in the faith.

9:30 a.m. - Worship with Confirmation and Holy Communion

10:30 a.m. - Greet, Meet, and Eat

10:45 a.m. - Christlight for Kids: The Coming of the Holy Spirit

10:45 a.m. - "Stories They Probably Didn't Teach You in Sunday School" - Who Says Those Genealogies in the Bible Are Boring?!"

TUESDAY 5/21 6:30 p.m. - Church Council meeting

THURSDAY 5/23 6:30 p.m. - Worship. Please note the special worship schedule for this holiday weekend!

SUNDAY 5/26 9:30 a.m. - Thursday evening's worship service will be presented on the large screen TV because Pastor Simons and family will be out of town attending the high school graduation of grandson, Lucas Steinbrenner.

MONDAY 5/27 - Memorial Day: Remember those in the armed services of those who gave the last full measure of devotion in defense of our nation.

TUESDAY 5/28 7:00 p.m. - The Chosen Watch Party & Discussion, S1 Ep.8

WEDNESDAY 5/29 5:00 p.m. - Set up for Mornings with Mommy

THURSDAY/FRIDAY 5/30 & 31 10:00 a.m. - Last Mornings with Mommy sessions of the season: "Monkeys, Zebras, and the Zoo!"

SPECIAL WORSHIP SCHEDULE FOR MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND!

Pastor Simons and family will be out of town from Friday 5/24 through Sunday 5/26 attending grandson Lucas’ Steinbrenner’s graduation from Wisconsin Lutheran High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Presumably due to the fact that it is a holiday weekend, a guest worship leader and preacher could not be arranged. Additionally, this schedule would permit those who plan to be out of town for the holiday weekend to have an opportunity to worship before leaving town. Here’s the schedule:

Thursday 5/23 6:30 p.m. – Live worship service will be held at church. This service will also be live-streamed and recorded for our website.

Sunday 5/26 at 9:30 a.m. – The recording of Thursday’s service will be presented in the sanctuary on the large screen TV & church sound system for those who still wish to worship on Sunday morning or who were unable to attend on Thursday evening.

LAST SUNDAY, THE ASCENSION FAMILY MADE TWO VERY IMPORTANT DECISIONS:

- A budget (plan and financial estimate) was adopted for our mission’s work from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. It is an aggressive but carefully thought-out plan to do significant things in kingdom work even as we move closer to becoming fully self-supporting. Copies of that budget are available on request. If you have not done so in previous recent issues, please read page 6 of this newsletter. We are an “all-hands-on-deck” mission congregation. The Word and the work are too important for us not to be.
- The decision was made to do some careful planning and fund-raising efforts regarding our parking lot replacement project before we commit to undertaking it. We have about \$31,000 in our Centennial Building Fund; the estimated cost of the project is currently about \$200,000. Financing the entire project now under our Church Extension Fund loan would more than double our monthly loan payments. It was decided that we need to try to decrease the amount we need to finance by increasing the amount on hand for the project.

Please watch for more information coming your way in the months ahead. If you have any ideas to share, please do. Any member of our Church Council will be an open ear!

The Ascension of Jesus

While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. Luke 24:51 (NIV)

Based on Luke 24:44-53



B T Q O M D Q S U F F E R U F
 F N C Q W O P S A L M S T S A
 G X N Q O F S M Z Z H N U C O
 B B Y C R O T E C M E T N R J
 R A P R S R S P S P F E C I A
 N I G Y H G U P E G K D L P S
 Z F S F I I M R N A N W D T P
 B J Z E P V F S T A Y E E U O
 X L K R E E G J T Q L H J R H
 E T E U D N X S Y L P D U E T
 E S X S E K R K I O E A M M P
 J S X V S E W F R N D X I C H
 A X A B D I L P E U V V N O R
 D E C N K U N P L F J S D Q S
 H R U I F H O G G V Y K S L C

RISE	REPENT	PROPHETS	TAKEN
SUFFER	PSALMS	OPENED	FORGIVE
HEAVEN	SCRIPTURE	FULFILLED	MOSES
WORSHIPED	BLESSING	UNDERSTAND	MINDS

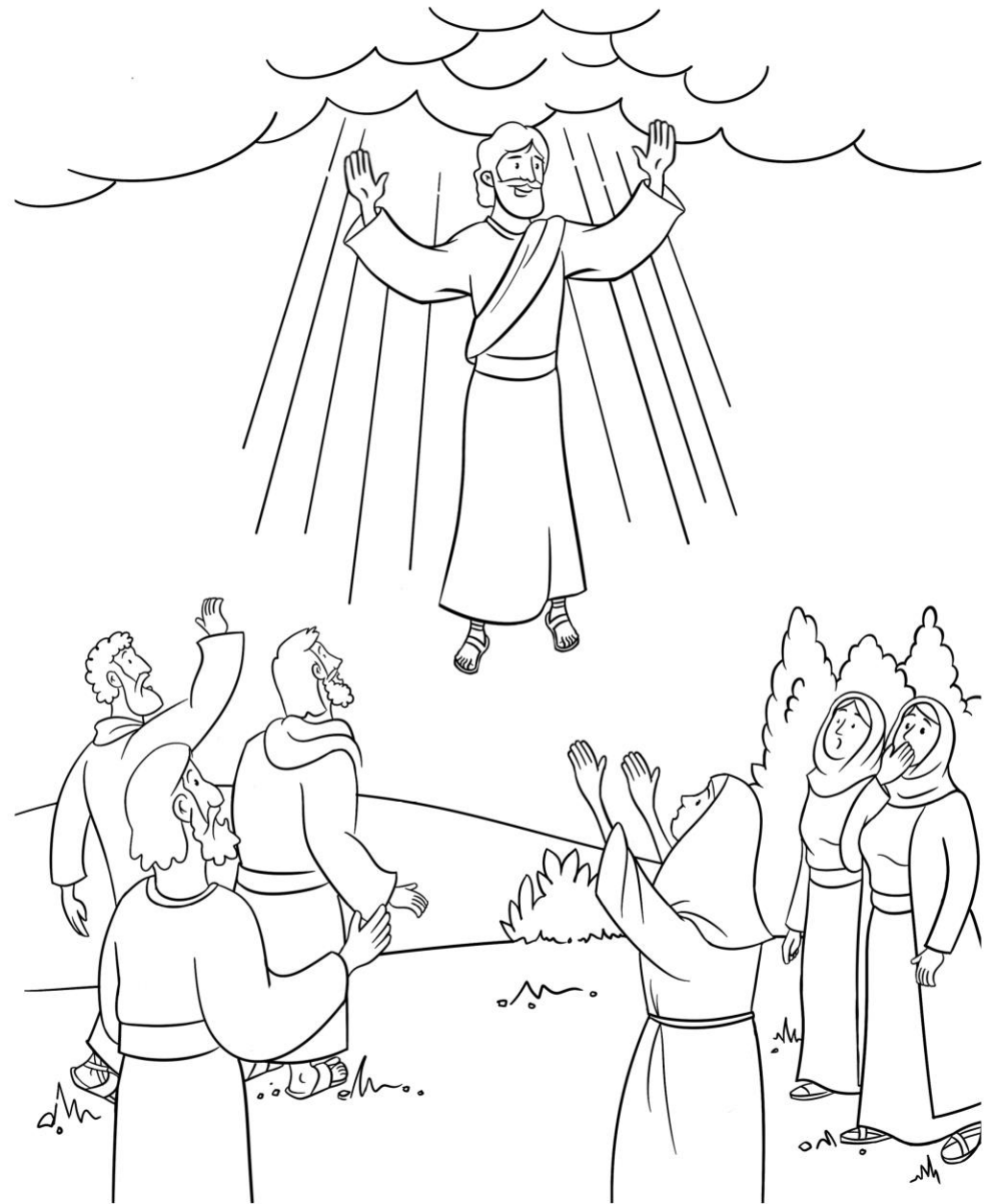
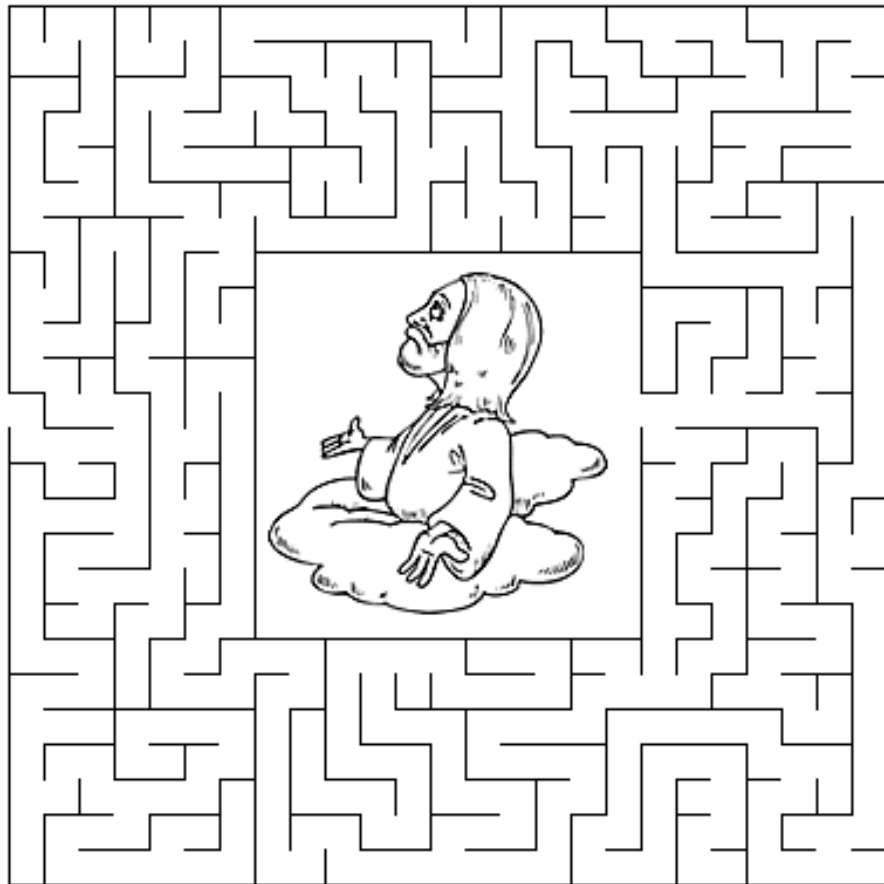
The Ascension of Jesus

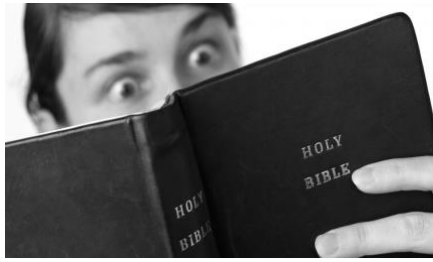
While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. Luke 24:51 (NIV)

Based on Luke 24:44-53



Start Here





“Stories They Probably Didn’t Teach You in Sunday School”

God Speaks through a Not-so-dumb Donkey

Who’s in Charge?



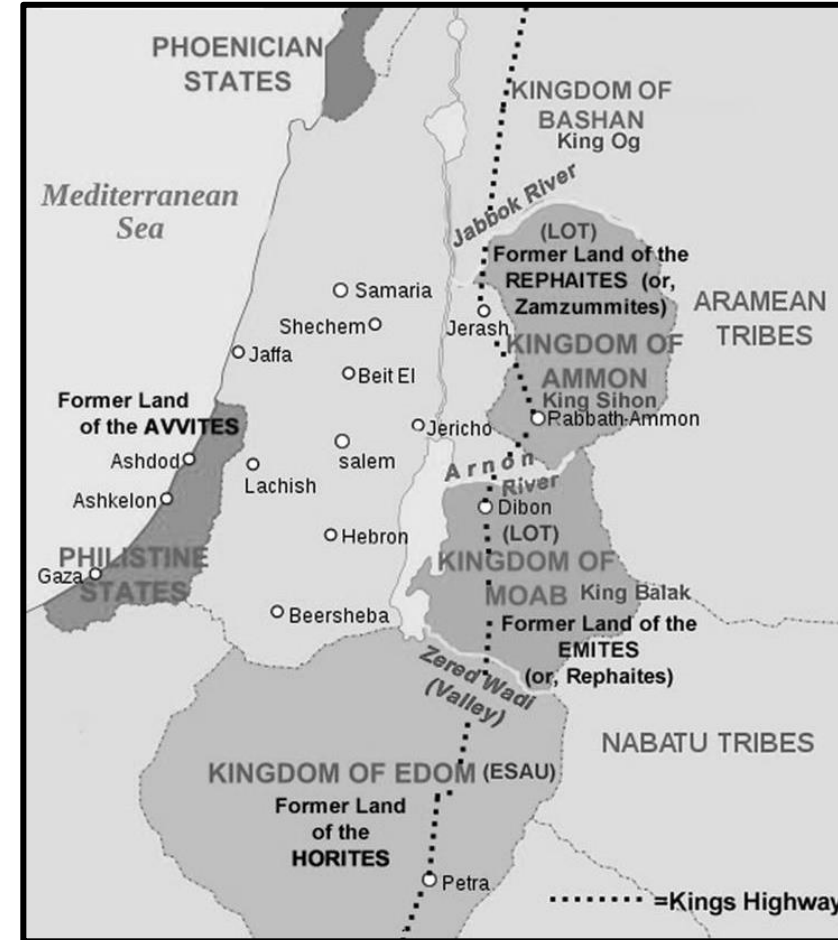
When Jesus ascended into heaven, he made a claim that does not always seem to ring true: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matthew 28:18). What do you see that sometimes makes Jesus’ control seem unclear or uncertain?

Nevertheless, recall the apostle Paul’s words we spoke today in our Opening Sentences from Ephesians 1: “God ... raised him from the dead and seated him at his

right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and above every name that is given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. God also placed all things under his feet and made him head over everything for the church.” Our experience as we live in a fallen world doesn’t always make divine control obvious. It often seems that fallen man not only puts obstacles in the way of God’s plan for his people, but may even thwart it.

In the odd little story we consider today, God shows us that he will bless his people no matter who may try to prevent it. God makes that clear in an incident so unusual and comical that many have chosen to regard it as a fictitious story. Yet, it is not presented that way at all. It is presented as a fact, embedded in the unfolding story of God keeping his promise to bless his people.

Where in Time and Place Are We?



As Israel approached Canaan from the south after leaving slavery in Egypt, there were kingdoms that were unnerved by 2 million people wanting to cross their lands to enter Canaan.

Edom: These were the descendants of Isaac’s son, Esau, whom his brother Jacob cheated out of the birthright by deceiving his half-blind father into thinking he was Esau. The King of Esau did not attack the Israelites, but flexed his military and told them to go around his country. God told

Israel to do so, rather than fight.

The next two kingdoms on their path were **Moab** and **Ammon**. The origins of these two tribes could well serve as addition “Stories They Never Taught You in Sunday School,” but they are disturbing in the extreme. After Lot and his family left Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot’s two daughters were concerned that he would not have descendants. One night when Lot was drunk, his elder daughter had sex with him and conceived. That Son would be called Moab (“from my father.”). The next night the younger did the same. Her son would be called Ammon (“from my people”). The descendants of these tribes were hostile to Israel.

What Happened? (Don't panic – we won't read all 3 chapters.)

Balak Hires Balaam

22 The Israelites set out and camped on the Plains of Moab along the Jordan across from Jericho. ²Balak son of Zippor saw everything that Israel had done to the Amorites. ³ So Moab was afraid of the people, because they were so numerous. Moab was terrified because of the Israelites. ⁴ Moab said to the elders of Midian, “Now this assembly will eat up everything around us, just as cattle eat up the grass in the field.” Balak son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time. ⁵ He sent messengers to summon Balaam, the son of Beor, from Pethor by the Euphrates River, in the land of his own people.^[a]

He said, “Look, a people came out of Egypt. They cover the surface of the land, and they are settling right across from me. ⁶ Please come now. Curse this people for me, for they are more powerful than I am. Perhaps I will succeed and strike them down, driving them out of the land, for I know that whomever you bless is blessed, and whomever you curse is cursed.”

⁷ The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian went with payments for his occult practices^[b] in their hand. They came to Balaam and told him what Balak said.

⁸ Balaam said to them, “Spend the night here, and I will report to you what the Lord says to me.” So the Moabite officials stayed with Balaam.

⁹ God came to Balaam and said, “Who are these men with you?”

¹⁰ Balaam said to God, “Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent messengers to me, who said, ¹¹ ‘Look, the people that has come out of Egypt covers the surface of the land. Now, come, curse them for me. Perhaps I will be able to fight against them and drive them out.’”

¹² God said to Balaam, “You are not to go with them. You are not to curse the people, for they are blessed.”

¹³ Balaam got up in the morning and said to Balak’s officials, “Go back to your land, because the Lord has refused to let me go with you.”

¹⁴ The officials of Moab got up and went back to Balak. They said, “Balaam refuses to come with us.”

¹⁵ So Balak again sent other officials, more numerous and more prestigious than the others. ¹⁶ They went to Balaam and said to him, “This is what Balak son of Zippor says,

‘Do not let anything prevent you from coming to me, ¹⁷ for I will reward you very richly. Also I will do whatever you tell me. Just come and curse this people for me.’”

¹⁸ Balaam responded to Balak’s servants, “Even if Balak would give to me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go against the command of the Lord my God to do anything small or great. ¹⁹ But please, stay and spend the night here, and I will find out what else the Lord might say to me.”

²⁰ God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “If the men have come to summon you, get up and go with them. However, do only what I tell you.” ²¹ Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the officials of Moab.

Balaam’s Donkey

²² But God’s anger burned because Balaam was going with them. So the Angel^[c] of the Lord stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. ²³ The donkey saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the road, with his drawn sword in his hand. So the donkey turned off the road and went into the field. Balaam struck the donkey to make it turn back to the road. ²⁴ Then the Angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards with walls on both sides. ²⁵ The donkey saw the Angel of the Lord and pressed against the wall and squeezed Balaam’s foot against the wall. Balaam struck the donkey again. ²⁶ Then the Angel of the Lord went ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn to the right or to the left. ²⁷ The donkey saw the Angel of the Lord and lay down under Balaam. Balaam’s anger burned, and he struck the donkey with his staff.

²⁸ The Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, which said to Balaam, “What have I done to you that you have struck me these three times?”

²⁹ Balaam said to the donkey, “Because you have made a fool of me! If only there was a sword in my hand, I would kill you now!”

³⁰ The donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your donkey, the one you have always ridden to this day? Is this what I usually do to you?”

He said, “No.”

³¹ Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the road, with his drawn sword in his hand. Balaam knelt and bowed with his face to the ground. ³² The Angel of the Lord said to him, “Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Look, I myself have come out to oppose you, because your way is reckless^[d] before me. ³³ The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three

times. If it had not turned away from me, I would have surely killed you by now and let the donkey live.”

³⁴ Balaam said to the Angel of the Lord, “I have sinned, for I didn’t know that you stood in the road to confront me. Now if this is displeasing to you, I will go back.”

³⁵ The Angel of the Lord said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but you will speak only the words that I speak to you.” So Balaam went with Balak’s officials.

Balak Meets Balaam

³⁶ When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at the Moabite town on the Arnon border at the edge of his territory. ³⁷ Balak said to Balaam, “Didn’t I send for you urgently when I summoned you? Why didn’t you come to me? Don’t you know that I can really reward you?”

³⁸ Balaam said to Balak, “Look, I have come to you now. But am I really able to say anything? I will speak only the words that God puts in my mouth.”

³⁹ Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath Huzoth. ⁴⁰ Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep and sent for Balaam and the officials who were with him. ⁴¹ In the morning, Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth Baal. From there, he saw the outskirts of the people.

Footnotes

- a. Numbers 22:5 Or *in the land of Amaw*
- b. Numbers 22:7 This is often translated *divination*, but divination refers primarily to obtaining occult knowledge. Balak was seeking the exercise of occult power.
- c. Numbers 22:22 Or *angel of the Lord*
- d. Numbers 22:32 Literally *the way is precipitous*

Balaam’s First Message

23 Balaam said to Balak, “Build seven altars for me here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here.”

² Balak did just as Balaam had said. Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar. ³ Balaam said to Balak, “Stand here by your burnt offering, while I go off by myself. Perhaps the Lord will come to meet me. Whatever he shows me I will tell you.” [So Balak went and stood by his burnt offering, and Balaam called to God.]^[a] and then he went off to a barren hill.

⁴ God met Balaam, and Balaam said to him, “I have set up seven altars, and I have offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.”

⁵ The Lord put a message into Balaam’s mouth and said, “Return to Balak, and you are to deliver this message.”

⁶ Balaam returned to Balak and found him standing by his burnt offering, along with all the officials of Moab. ⁷ Balaam took up his oracle. He said:

From Aram, Balak has brought me.

Balak, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains, said,

“Come, curse Jacob for me.

Come, denounce Israel.”

⁸ How can I curse someone God has not cursed?

How can I denounce someone the Lord has not denounced?

⁹ Yes, from the rocky peaks I see him.

From the hills I look at him.

Look! A people that dwells apart,

that does not consider itself to be one of the nations.

¹⁰ Who can count the dust of Jacob,

or number even a fourth of Israel?

May I die the death of the righteous!

May my final end be like his!

¹¹ Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have just blessed them.”

¹² Balaam answered, “Don’t I have to speak accurately whatever the Lord puts in my mouth?”

Balaam’s Second Message

¹³ Balak said to Balaam, “Please come with me to another place where you can see them. You will see only their outskirts. You will not see all of them. From there curse them for me.”

¹⁴ Balak took Balaam into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah. Balak built seven altars and offered up a bull and a ram on each altar. ¹⁵ Balaam said to Balak, “Stand here by your burnt offering, while I meet the Lord over there.”

¹⁶ The Lord met with Balaam and put a message in his mouth. The Lord said, “Return to Balak, and you are to deliver this message.”

¹⁷ Balaam came back to Balak and found him standing by his burnt offering, and the officials of Moab were with him. Balak said to him, "What did the Lord say?"

¹⁸ Balaam took up his oracle and said:

Get up, Balak, and listen!

Give ear to me, son of Zippor.

¹⁹ God is not a man, that he should lie,
nor a son of man, that he changes his mind.

Does he say something, and then not carry it out?

Does he speak, and then not bring it about?

²⁰ Look, I have received a command to bless.

He has blessed, and I cannot change that.

²¹ No disaster is in sight for Jacob.

No suffering is seen in Israel.

The Lord his God is with him.

The shout for the King is among them.

He rejoices in his King.

²² God brings them out of Egypt.

God is like the horns of a wild ox for him.

²³ Surely there is no occult power against Jacob,
no omen against Israel.

They will say about Jacob and Israel,

"What great things God has done!"

²⁴ Look, the people rise up like a lioness.

Like a lion they lift themselves up.

He will not lie down until he eats the prey,
until he drinks the blood of the slain.

²⁵ Then Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all! Do not bless them at all!"

²⁶ But Balaam answered Balak, "Didn't I say to you that I must do everything
the Lord says?"

Balaam's Third Message

²⁷ Balak said to Balaam, "Come on, I will take you to another place. Maybe God will
agree to let you curse them for me from there."

²⁸ Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the wasteland. ²⁹ Balaam said
to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for

me here." ³⁰ Balak did just as Balaam had said and offered up a bull and a ram on every
altar.

Footnotes

- a. Numbers 23:3 The words in half-brackets are not in the Hebrew text but are present
in the Greek Old Testament. An accidental omission from the Hebrew text may have
occurred as the scribe's eye jumped from one occurrence of *he went* to another.

24 When Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not go to look for
omens as he had done at the other times, but he set his face toward the
wilderness. ² When Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel dwelling according to
their tribes, the Spirit of God was upon him. ³ He took up his oracle and said:

The declaration of Balaam son of Beor,

the declaration of the man whose eye is open,

⁴ the declaration of the one who hears the words of God,

who sees the vision of the Almighty,

who is falling down, but his eyes are wide open:

⁵ How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob,
and your dwelling places, O Israel!

⁶ Like rows of palm trees^[a] they stretch out,
like gardens by the riverside,
like aloes which the Lord has planted,
like cedar trees beside the waters.

⁷ Water will flow from his buckets.
His seed^[b] will have abundant waters.
His king will be higher than Agag.
His kingdom will be lifted up.

⁸ God brings him out of Egypt.
God is like the horns of a wild ox for him.
He will eat up the nations who are his adversaries.
He will gnaw on their bones.

He will pierce them through with his arrows.

⁹ He crouches like a lion.
He lies down like a lioness.

Who will rouse him?

The one who blesses you is blessed. The one who curses you is cursed.

¹⁰ Balak's anger burned against Balaam, and he slapped his hands together. Balak said to Balaam, "I summoned you to curse my enemies, but look, all you have done is bless them these three times. ¹¹ Now get out of here. Go to your own place! I said I would really reward you, but look, the Lord has denied you a reward."

¹² Balaam said to Balak, "Didn't I tell the messengers you sent to me, 'I will say what the Lord says. ¹³ Even if Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I can't go against the command of the Lord by doing anything good or bad of my own will'?"^[c] ¹⁴ Yes, I am going back to my people, but pay attention now—I will tell you what this people will do to your people in days to come."

Balaam's Fourth Message

¹⁵ Balaam took up his oracle and said:

The declaration of Balaam son of Beor,

the declaration of the man whose eye is open,

¹⁶ the declaration of the one who hears the words of God,

who receives knowledge from the Most High,

who sees the vision of the Almighty,

who is falling down, but his eyes are wide open:

¹⁷ I see him, but not now.

I behold him, but not near.

A star will come out of Jacob.

A scepter will rise up out of Israel.

It will smash the foreheads of Moab

and the skulls^[d] of all the people of Sheth.

¹⁸ Edom will lose its territory to others.

Seir, Israel's enemy, also will become a possession,

but Israel will display its power.

¹⁹ One who comes from Jacob will rule,

and he will destroy the survivors of the city.

Balaam's Final Messages

²⁰ He looked at Amalek, took up his oracle, and said:

First among the nations was Amalek,

but his end will come to destruction.

²¹ He looked at the Kenites, took up his oracle, and said:

Permanent is your dwelling place.

Set in stone is your nest.

²² However, you Kenites will be destroyed,
when Ashshur takes you captive.

²³ He took up his oracle and said:

Ah, who will live when God does this?

²⁴ But ships will come from the coast of Kittim.

They will oppress Ashshur.

They will oppress Eber.

But they also will come to destruction.^[e]

²⁵ Balaam got up and left to return to his place. Balak also went on his way.

Footnotes

a. Numbers 24:6 Or *streams*

b. Numbers 24:7 Here *seed* may refer both to literal seed and to offspring.

c. Numbers 24:13 Literally *of my heart*

d. Numbers 24:17 The translation follows the Samaritan Pentateuch, which has a clearer word than the rare word in the main Hebrew text, which could, in fact, be a copying error.

e. Numbers 24:24 All the nations named in this oracle appear to be local neighbors of the Israelites near the time of Moses. Ashshur is not Assyria but the local Ashshur referred to in Genesis 25:3. The Kittim probably are the Philistines, not the Romans, who are also called Kittim. However, the principle stated in the oracle applies to the later enemies as well. All the nations of the world are subjected to the Messiah.

Let's Discuss the Story

Read 22:1-5a – What was the concern of King Balak of Moab?

Read 22:5b-6 – Why didn't King Balak simply confront Israel militarily?

Whom did he contract to put the hit on Israel?

Read 22:7-12 – How did God get involved in this developing situation?

Read 22:13-21 – Someone once said, "If you are determined to disobey God and he lets you have your way, beware." What does that mean and how do you see that setting the stage in this story?

Read 22:22-35- This is not the first time that an animal spoke in Bible. Explain

This writer is convinced that this part of the story shows that God has a wonderful sense of humor. Explain.

What evidence of God's grace do you find in this part of the story?

Read 22:38, 23:12, 23:26, and 24:12 – What is the limit God consistently applies to Balaam's attempts to curse Israel?

3 times in a row, Balaam is sent to view the Israelites from a different vantage point and curse them. In each case, what comes out of the Balaam's mouth?

Read 24:17 – God introduces the reason why he will not permit Israel's enemies to be successful in their attempt to destroy them. Explain

Name other Old Testament stories in which we see God preserving the line of the Savior or promises pertaining to him.

In this verse, Balaam gives us an example of what we might call "prophetic perspective." What did Balaam see regarding the WHO?

What did he see regarding the WHEN?

Read 24:25 – What is the conclusion of this strange little incident?

Truths worth holding onto:

Read 23:8 – Compare this verse with Paul's words in Romans 8:33-34: **"Who will bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies! ³⁴ Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus, who died and, more than that, was raised to life, is the one who is at God's right hand and who is also interceding for us!"**

Why can't anyone curse as damned sinners?

Read 23:19 – Why is the complete reliability of God's Word a strong comfort to us?

24:25 might well serve as an epitaph for every attempt by Satan, his demons, and the unbelieving world to thwart God's plan to bless his people. The truth of this verse is restated in elsewhere in Scripture: Matthew 16:17-18 – **"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overpower it."**

NEXT WEEK:

Read the genealogies of Jesus recorded in Matthew 1:1-17 (Abraham to Jesus) and Luke 3:23-38 (Adam to Jesus).

