

God's mail carrier

Numbers 21–24

"IF JESUS WERE ALIVE TODAY, he'd be pro-choice!" I couldn't believe it when I first heard that statement made by a minister of a church. How absurd! In the first place, Jesus is alive today. In the second place, he came that we would have life. Did the preacher not remember Jesus loved and protected little children and warned of serious repercussions if anyone harmed one of them? Jesus said, "The same as you do to the least of these you do to me" (Matthew 25:45, author's translation).

We're hearing a lot of strange and conflicting statements from those who claim to speak for God these days. It demonstrates that when spiritual leaders no longer regard the Bible as the inspired Word of God, they can make the Jesus of their imagination say anything they want him to say. But there is one true God in Heaven who has communicated his will clearly in his Word. And it's the task of any who claim to represent God to convey exactly what God has revealed.

Sometimes it takes courage to speak God's truth. It's not always what people want to hear. Isaiah had to tell Hezekiah he was going to die. Samuel had to tell Saul the throne was taken from him and given to another. Peter

had to tell Ananias that God had rejected his offering.

It's not popular to tell people today what God's Word says. Jesus is the only way to salvation, God hates divorce, homosexuality is detestable, sex is reserved for marriage, grumbling is a terrible sin, Christians should tithe, baptism is necessary for the assurance of salvation—the list goes on!

One preacher who was under attack for his biblical stance simply replied, "Hey, don't blame me! I didn't write this; it's a letter from God. I'm just the mail carrier!" If you share God's Word in any form—preaching, teaching, singing, writing, or witnessing—remember, as God's messenger, you have a responsibility to relay what he has said. You're not to say what "itching ears" want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3, *King James Version*).

The prophet Balaam was reminded of this responsibility. Balak, king of Moab, asked Balaam to pronounce a curse on the Israelites. But Balaam said, "How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced?" (Numbers 23:8). When the king pressured the prophet, "He answered, 'Must I not speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?'" (23:12).

The king attempted to bribe and

intimidate Balaam so he'd be more cooperative. Balaam was really tempted and checked with God again to see if the message had changed. But God replied, "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (23:19).

Balaam told the king what God said. He could not curse the Israelites. He could not promise him victory over Gods' people. Balaam answered, "Did I not tell you I must do whatever the LORD says?" (23:26).

King Balak angrily responded, "I said I would reward you handsomely, but the LORD has kept you from being rewarded." Balaam answered, "Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything of my own accord, good or bad, to go beyond the command of the LORD—and I must say only what the LORD says" (24:11, 13).

That's good advice for Bible teachers today. Carry the mail—don't alter it. ■

©2003 Bob Russell



Bob Russell is senior minister at Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, Kentucky.

Day by Day With the Bible

Use this guide to read through the Bible in 12 months. Follow Bob Russell's comments on the highlighted text in every issue of THE LOOKOUT.

- Day 1**
- Matthew 24:1–14
 - Romans 6:15–23
 - Psalm 56
 - Numbers 21, 22**

- Day 2**
- Matthew 24:15–35
 - Romans 7:1–12
 - Psalm 57
 - Numbers 23–25**

- Day 3**
- Matthew 24:36–51
 - Romans 7:13–25
 - Psalm 58
 - Numbers 26, 27**

- Day 4**
- Matthew 25:1–13
 - Romans 8:1–17
 - Psalm 59
 - Numbers 28–30**

- Day 5**
- Matthew 25:14–30
 - Romans 8:18–39
 - Psalm 60
 - Numbers 31, 32**

- Day 6**
- Matthew 25:31–46
 - Romans 9:1–18
 - Psalm 61
 - Numbers 33–36**

What Do You Think?

1. When was the last time you needed courage to speak God's truth?
2. How did God honor your commitment to speak his truth?