

Shortcuts & Short Circuits

15 - 2 Peter: A Blazing Faith
Sunday, 28 July 2013 | Church on the Park

Text: 2 Peter 2:10-22

Theme: False teachers and teaching try to short circuit us by offering shortcuts to spiritual journey. But Jesus' way is the best (and only) way.

Intro: Last week we saw that God throughout history separates light from darkness, and our purpose in this world is to be a light in the darkness. God wants us engaged in this world but not entangled by it. This week we will see that it's possible to become entangled with this world when we are impatient with the journey God (Num. 21:4-5) has us on and what the remedy for our impatience is.

1) There are two ways set before us: the straight way and the roadway. It's possible to get impatient with God's way and opt for a shortcut, short circuiting your soul. (2 Pet. 2:15 cf. Matt. 7:13-23)

- **Short Circuit** - An electrical path in a circuit that causes most of the current to flow around or away from some other path in the circuit. Accidental short circuits, especially between the high and low voltages of a power supply, can cause very strong current to flow, possibly damaging or overheating the circuit. (caused by low resistance in a wire that is not able to handle the power)
 - Short circuits cause fires and major disasters. They downed the new **Boeing Dreamliner** (battery fire). They can cause nuclear meltdowns. One of the most recent disasters is **Fukushima** Nuclear power plant, where a rod was found by a power rod.
- The **enemy's work** is to try to short circuit our spiritual lives.
- Numbers 21:4: "But the people grew impatient on the way."
- Peter paints false teachers in a very **bleak** way. Why? Our **flesh** is **attracted** to false teaching and false teachers. They say what we want to hear and make us feel good. They look attractive and successful. If we do not see past the **facade** we will fall for their goods and **short circuit** our lives.
 - "seduce the unstable" (v. 14)
 - "**low resistance**" to temptation and the world's traps. A low resistance to carrying your cross. God wants to build you to have high resistance.

2) Balaam is an example of someone who grew impatient with God and went down the roadway of destruction (2 Pet. 2:15-16; Num. 22-24)

- "forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for* a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet." (2 Pet. 2:15-16) ¹

¹ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. 1995 (2 Pe 2:15–16). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

- The narrative of Balaam is a very **peculiar** if you read it carefully. It would seem at the surface that Lot was unrighteous and Balaam was the righteous.
- Numbers 22:1ff
- The story of Balaam - The Crooked Way. The **mystery** of Balaam is that he **looks pious** in all his dealings.
 - If you had not read Peter, it's possible to think that Balaam was a righteous man
 - Balaam comes from a name meaning "**not of the people.**" He is the son of **burning** from a place called '**soothsayer.**' He's known to have power, so he was bought by the Moabites to curse Israel.
 - Balaam is someone that goes where the money is. He's not led by the Spirit but by the dollar, his flesh.
 - "God said, 'Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed.'" (Num. 22:12)
 - Why did God later say go? Because Balaam desired to go despite his warning. God would show his power through Balaam even despite his sin. (Remember the story of Saul - Saul means desired)
 - "The angel of the Lord said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because **your way was contrary to me.**"²
 - How was Balaam a false prophet? It had to do with his **heart**. He was religious but his heart was far from God (cf. *Matt. 15:7-9)
- The **context** of the story: the people become **impatient** with the journey. "Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became **impatient because of the journey**. The people spoke against God and Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food.'" (Num. 21:4-5)
- **The Bronze serpent** was the answer. Looking at the cross (John 3). When you become impatient with the way, look at the cross and remember the way of Christ.
- Numbers 21 - "Spring up, O well!"

3) By looking at Jesus on the cross, we can see God's way and be healed (John 3:14-15).

- The **Jesus' way** is the way of the cross
- The enemy tried to get him to take **shortcuts**. We see this in his wilderness temptation.
- In the **wilderness** Jesus was reversing the sin that Israel committed in the wilderness.
- Luke 4:1-13
 - **Three temptations:** lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride (1 John 2:15-17)

² *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.* 1995 (Nu 22:32). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

- When we are impatient with the journey the **serpents of false teaching** come out to bite us and eventually we die.
 - The Pilgrim's short cuts
 - **Witchcraft** is the fruit of impatience. We want things now, so we use supernatural power and spells to get them. We become religious to get what we want, rather than do things God's way. "Despise authority." Authority is the main issue behind false teaching and false teachers. "You're not the boss, Jesus is" (Eva). The authority of Jesus as Lord, Scripture as his Spirit-inspired Word and the Father's authority to choose the Son.

4) Obedience is the key to staying in God's way. God's way is the way of obedience.

- Obedience must always be put before experience.
- Balaam had an experience with God, but did not obey God in his heart
- Exo. 13:17-18. God's way may seem longer, but it's because he is protecting us from being short circuited

Conclusion: God's straight way leads to life and we follow it by looking at Jesus and being obedient to him. The crooked way of short cuts may look enticing, but it will only lead to death.

END NOTES

Shortcuts and Short Circuits

What distinguishes false teaching and true teaching is not what they offer, but how they get there. They both offer inheritance, blessing, freedom, righteousness and love, but how they get there is two different ways. One way leads to life; the other to destruction. Both offer the same promises, but both go through different pathways.

False teachers can even give accurate prophecies, but their motives are wrong. The Pharisees of Jesus day taught many good things. Jesus even echoed much of Rabbinic teaching. One time he said, "Listen to what they say, but do not do as they do." Their words did not agree with their life. Their words and life were not in harmony, they were like chords that clashed, grating the ears.

The dangers of religion

The Two Ways - Matthew 7

Balaam is someone who is entangled with the world in his heart, but pious on the outside.

- A wolf in sheep's clothing
 - "White washed sepulchers" full of dead man's bones
- False teachers and prophets will say some truth, they may even prophesy accurately.
 - "Didn't we prophesy in your name?"
- The struggle between God and Mammon
- Motivated by money and prestige
- Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life
- "These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me"
- Falseness is an issue of the heart

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How is your way?

"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."³

What was the error of Balaam since he spoke God's true word?

There's no short-cuts in the way. Learn to enjoy the journey.

The Jesus' Way

- Jesus in the wilderness
- The three-pronged temptation
 - Each temptation is a short-cut.
- Jesus' way is obedience

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The Hope: After Jesus' wilderness came the power

END NOTES

εὐθύς euthús; fem. eutheía, neut. euthú, adj. Straight. As an adj.: Make the way straight and level before the king (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4, 5 from Is. 40:3). In Acts

³ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. 1995 (Nu 24:1). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

9:11, “a street called straight” (a.t.). Metaphorically, of the heart and life, right, true (Acts 8:21; 13:10; 2 Pet. 2:15; Sept.: 1 Sam. 12:23; 1 Kgs. 11:33; Hos. 14:10).

Deriv.: euthéōs (2112) immediately; euthúnō (2116), to make straight or to govern; euthútēs (2118), rectitude.

Syn.: aklinēs (186), firm, unwavering; hétoimos (2092), ready, prepared; orthós (3717), straight, upright; díkaios (1342), righteous, just, right; agathós (18), good; tímios (5093), honorable; éntimos (1784), valued; tachinós (5031), swift; chrēstós (5543), gracious, kind; akéraios (185), harmless, honest; áxios (514), worthy; eilikrinēs (1506), sincere.

Bil‘am /bil·awm/] n pr m loc. Probably from 1077 and 5971; TWOT] בִּלְעָם, בִּלְעָם 251b; GK 1189 and 1190; 61 occurrences; AV translates as “Balaam” 60 times, and “Bileam” once. 1 the son of Beor, a man endowed with the gift of prophecy. 2 a town in Manasseh. *Additional Information:* Balaam = “not of the people”.⁴

Bâ‘owr /beh·ore/] n pr m. From 1197 (int the sense of burning); GK 1242; 10] בְּעוֹר, בְּעוֹר occurrences; AV translates as “Beor” 10 times. 1 father of Balaam. 2 father of Bela, king of Edom. *Additional Information:* Beor = “burning”.⁵

[Pâthowr /peth·ore/] n pr loc. Of foreign origin; GK 7335; Two occurrences; AV translates as “Pethor” twice. 1 a town of Mesopotamia and the home of Balaam; located on a river; site unknown. *Additional Information:* Pethor = “soothsayer”.⁶

qecem /keh·sem/] n m. From 7080; TWOT 2044a; GK 7877; 11 occurrences;] בְּעֵשֶׂם, בְּעֵשֶׂם AV translates as “divination” nine times, “witchcraft” once, and “divine sentence” once. 1 divination, witchcraft. 1a of the nations, Balaam. 1b of false prophets. 1c in a good sense (king’s lips as oracles).⁷

(qāsam) **practice divination.** Denominative verb.

Parent Noun

2044a בְּעֵשֶׂם (qesem) **divination, witchcraft.**

2044b מִיִּקְסָם (miqsām) **divination.**

Like the noun *qesem*, this verb describes some variety of divination. And as with all other manifestations of the occult, this practice was outlawed in Israel and spoken of with scorn.

The participial form appears in the long list of such practices in Deuteronomy 18 (vv. 10, 14).

⁴ Strong, J. (2001). *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

⁵ Strong, J. (2001). *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

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Balaam was such a “soothsayer” or “diviner.” Both the participial and nominal forms are used in connection with him (Num 22:7; 23:23; Josh 13:22).

Saul commanded the woman at En-dor to “divine” for him with *’ôb* (q.v.) in I Sam 28:8. The only other prose passages using *qāsam* are I Sam 6:2 in reference to the Philistine “diviners” and II Kgs 17:17, a list of Israelite offenses which prompted God to exile them. The major prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel and the minor prophets Micah and Zechariah all mention *qāsam* in a derogatory sense. In Isa 3:2 the “diviner” is grouped with the honorable professions of soldier, judge, prophet, and elder as well as enchanter (v. 3). But the “diviners” receive God’s curse in Isa 44:25.

Jeremiah’s two uses are in 27:9 and 29:8, where he compares his own prophecy with those who would rather offer god omens.

Ezekiel uses *qāsam* in 13:9; 21:21, 23, 29; and 22:28. The references in chap. 21 are to Nebuchadnezzar’s “divination” with arrows. Apparently he chose the route of attack by flinging down a handful of arrows. This is the only passage to hint at the actual process involved in *qasani*.

Micah 3:6f. and Zech 10:2 also speak disparagingly of the “diviners” comparing them with the false prophets and dreamers.

qesem). ***Divination, witchcraft, sorcery, fortunetelling, omen, lot, oracle,*** **𐤒 𐤀 𐤓** decision. The exact meaning of this variety of occultism is unknown. That fact accounts for the variety of translations. The account in Ezk 21:21–22 [H 27–28] is the only clue to exactly how *qesem* may have been practiced. Shaking or flinging down arrows, consulting teraphim, and hepatoscopy (looking at the liver) may be subcategories of *qesem*. In any event, verse 22 [H 28] uses *qesem* as if it were one of the arrows to be thrown down. In fact, the neb translates the word as “augur’s arrow” and the nab as “divining arrow.” The jb uses “omen” and “lot” in these two verses. Another interesting use of *qesem* is at Num 22:7, where the word seems to indicate a “reward” or “fee” for “divination” (Berkeley Version, sorcery; Amplified, foretelling; neb, augury) to be paid to Balaam. Later in that account (Num 23:23) *qesem* is parallel to *naḥaš* (cf. II Kgs 17:17). In Jer 14:14 it is parallel to “lying vision,” “a thing of nought,” and “self-deceit” (cf. Ezk 13:6, 23).

A third noteworthy passage is Prov 16:10. There the Av has “divine sentence,” the RSV “inspired decisions,” and the jb, neb, and NAb “oracles.” Whereas *qesem* is generally forbidden (Deut 18:10), or only used by non-Israelites, in Prov 16:10 it seems perfectly permissible and commendable. The best known occurrence of *qesem* is in I Sam 15:23, where Samuel confronts Saul for disobedience in the matter of the spoils from the Amalekite victory. The prophet declared:

To obey is better than sacrifice
and to hearken than the fat of rams.
For rebellion is as the sin of *qesem*.

The traditional rendering “witchcraft” is followed by the ASV, Amplified and the neb, while the jb has “sorcery” and the Berkeley Version has “fortunetelling.”

miqsām). Divination. Ezekiel 12:24 and 13:7 have the only occurrences of) **𐤒 𐤀 𐤓** *miqsām*. In the former reference the “divination” is characterized by the adjective *ḥālāq* ((flattering or deceitful) and in the latter reference by *kāzāb* (lying

Bibliography: Davies, T. W. “Witch,” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Eerdmans, 1955. Guillaume, Alfred, *Prophecy and Divination*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938. Kitchen, K. A., “Magic and Sorcery,” in NBD, pp. 766–71. Liefeld, W. “Divination,” in ZEPB, II, pp. 146–49. Summers, Montague, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, University Books, 1956. Reiner, Erica, “Fortune Telling in Mesopotamia,” JNES 19:23–35.⁸

Pilgrim’s Progress and the impostor at the end.

⁸ Alden, R. (1999). 2044 םקָ. In R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr. & B. K. Waltke, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (805–806). Chicago: Moody Press.