Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only）

Numbers 24: 6-9

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time to read the bible again. We continue to read Numbers chapter 24. Today, we are reading verses 6 through 9.

Yesterday we began to read Balaam's third prophecy. This time it was not that God put words in Balaam's mouth, but that the Spirit of God came upon Balaam, and Balaam had an experience different from the past. Therefore, in this poem blessing the Israelites, he first speaks of his own condition: he was originally a man whose eyes were closed, but now his spiritual eyes have been opened, he can hear the words of God, he can see the vision of God, and he has become a man who falls down before God; at this time he sees that the Israelites are a people blessed by God.

The Israelites were encamped in the wilderness before his eyes, the 12 tribes surrounding the tabernacle of meeting on all four sides in orderly array, and he spoke the most central verse of the third prophecy: "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings, O Israel!" The tents of Jacob are the place where the 12 tribes of Israel dwelt; according to God's ordination, three tribes formed one camp, and each camp had its own standard and guarded one direction of the tabernacle of meeting: on the east was the camp of Judah, on the south the camp of Reuben, on the west the camp of Ephraim, on the north the camp of Dan; they encamped entirely in accordance with God's arrangement. Balaam looked and could not help but cry out, "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob!"

The Israelites encamped on all four sides guarding the tabernacle of meeting, which highlights that the tabernacle of meeting is the center of the Israelites' living and movement. The tabernacle of meeting is the place where the LORD God dwells, where priests and Levites serve God according to God's statutes: the fire on the altar never ceased, the fragrant smoke of incense rose slowly upward and merged

together with the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire above the tabernacle of meeting, and it looked so harmonious, so solemn, and so beautiful; Balaam could not help but cry out again, “How beautiful are Your dwellings, O Israel!”

Verse 6: “Like valleys that stretch out, like gardens by the riverside, like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters.”

“Like valleys that stretch out” refers to the Israelites’ tents being like small hills, with the gaps between the tents like valleys, thousands upon thousands of peaks and valleys joined together — what a magnificent sight. And the many hills surrounding the tabernacle of meeting form an exceedingly solid barrier; who would dare to come and invade? “Like gardens by the riverside” — the gaps between the tents are also like rivers, and the tents are like gardens planted beside the river water, where, because the water source is ample, the gardens are full of crops, full of greenery, and full of the scene of life.

And if we observe more closely, it is truly extraordinary — they are “aloes planted by the LORD.” Aloes are an exceedingly precious spice, and the garden is planted full of aloe trees, giving off the sweet fragrance of God. It is also planted full of “cedars.” Cedar wood is tall and straight, and is a first-rate building material. Balaam saw the scene of the 12 tribes of Israel encamped, and it brought forth an abundant blessing.

Balaam’s blessing on the Israelites also applies to the New Testament church. The churches are like valleys that stretch out, and the saints go up to the high mountain to worship and praise God. The church is also like a garden by the riverside, full of the flow of the water of grace, and every garden sends forth an abundant expression of life. Within it there are aloe trees, giving off the fragrance that comes from knowing Christ, drawing people to come here to know salvation. One saint after another grows into a tall, upright cedar, suitable for the building up of the church.

Balaam's poem expresses the essence of the church. A Gentile prophet, with the Spirit of God coming upon him, could make such a beautiful utterance. Every saint is a person with the indwelling Holy Spirit — should we not send forth a yet more surpassing praise?

Verse 7: "He shall pour water from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters. His king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted."

Balaam compares Israel to a bucket holding water; because the water source is ample, the water overflows and pours out from the bucket, and the places they pass through become places of many waters; and they scatter seed in places of many waters, and the seed takes root and sprouts, puts out branches and grows leaves. These two lines of poetry describe the Israelites being fruitful and multiplying, with abundant blessing wherever they go, and with ample clothing and sufficient food. So that "his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted" expresses that Israel would become a strong and powerful nation, surpassing the neighboring nations. There is one difficulty here, namely: who exactly does Agag refer to? If you consult different exegetical reference works, there are mainly two different views.

The first view is that, according to the explicit record in Scripture, the name Agag first appears in 1 Samuel 15:7-9, where it is recorded that Agag was king of the Amalekites, in the era when Saul was king, when the Amalekites were the enemies of the Israelites. The Amalekites appear very early in the Bible, and when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the first battle they encountered was the fight with the Amalekites at Rephidim, recorded in Exodus 17:8-13, when Moses prayed on the mountain and Joshua fought below; when Moses lifted up his hand the Israelites prevailed, and when Moses' hand grew heavy the Amalekites prevailed. Afterward Aaron and Hur supported Moses' hands until sunset, and Joshua killed the king of Amalek.

The Amalekites dwelt in the land of Canaan and were continually a difficulty to the Israelites, and therefore there are many records concerning the Amalekites. All the

way to 1 Samuel chapter 15, there appears yet another king, named Agag. Samuel told Saul to strike the Amalekites and to utterly destroy them. However King Saul spared King Agag and preserved Agag's life. This was Saul's failure, and this failure, several hundred years later, nearly brought about the danger of the Israelites being wiped out as a race.

In Esther 3:1-6, by that time the southern kingdom and northern kingdom of Israel had long since perished, and it was the era of the rule of the Persian Empire. Ahasuerus king of Persia promoted Haman the Agagite to be prime minister, and Haman was a descendant of King Agag. Haman schemed to kill all the Jews in the kingdom of Persia, and if Queen Esther had not bravely stood forth and rescued the Jews, the Jews would have been exterminated, and Satan would have destroyed God's plan of redemption. Therefore, this prophecy of Balaam runs through the whole history of the Israelites: although Agag king of Amalek was strong, he could not surpass the Israelites. Although Agag's descendant Haman was sinister, he was seen through by the Jewish woman Esther, and the danger of extermination was averted. In the end the Amalekites could not overcome the Israelites.

The second view confines itself to that era: the Amalekites were inhabitants of the land of Canaan and were also a powerful people; and Agag was the title of the king of Amalek, just as Pharaoh was the title of the king of Egypt. However, the evidence for this point is not sufficient, because the Amalekites appear from Genesis, in the time of Abraham, and yet the Bible never mentions Agag until the era when Saul was king, when King Agag appeared; and Agag's descendants later became a people — if it were a title, it should not have become an ethnic group. Therefore, I personally am more inclined toward the first view.

Generally speaking, the prophecies in the Bible have several layers of fulfillment. Balaam's prophecy was already fulfilled in the Old Testament era upon the Israelites; in the New Testament era, Balaam's prophecy is being fulfilled in the church. The flow of the water of grace fills the bucket of the church and overflows to the communities neighboring the church; and the seed of the gospel, through the saints' response to the call of the Great Commission, is scattered in the heart-fields of seekers, and this draws many people to come to the church. Christ is the

Head of the church, reigning as king in the hearts of the saints, and the kingship of Christ far surpasses the schemes and devices of Satan, protecting the purity and rest of the church; and this will continue right up to the time when Christ comes again, when the millennial kingdom will be raised up and Christ will reign among all peoples.

Verse 8: "God brings him out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox; He shall consume the nations, his enemies; He shall break their bones and pierce them with his arrows."

God led the Israelites out of Egypt, delivering them from the rule of Pharaoh; although they wandered in the wilderness for nearly 40 years, this too was a testing God permitted, in order to remove the old man of unbelief among them and produce a new man of obedience. They have strength like a wild ox, and are to consume the nations, their enemies, to break their bones, and to pierce them with their arrows. Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan are the best examples.

In the same way, in the New Testament, Christ is to lead the church to be separated out from the rule of the world, supplying life through the Holy Spirit. The church is full of the power of life, and is to spread the gospel of Christ's victory throughout the inhabited earth; the church is to consume all the works of Satan, to break the temptations of the world, and to pierce through the lusts of the flesh with the arrows of the truth. Balaam's prophecy was already fulfilled upon the Israelites, and today it is being fulfilled in the church life.

Verse 9: "He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him? Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you."

When the Israelites moved forward, the camp of Judah, bearing the standard of the lion, took the lead: bowing down like a lion, ready to strike its prey; lying down like a lioness, enjoying its prey — who would dare to rouse him?

In the New Testament, Christ is first the Lamb of atonement, laying down His life and shedding His blood, accomplishing redemption, and then rising and ascending; when the time is fulfilled, Christ will come back again, and at that time He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Revelation 19:11-16 records the scene of Christ's coming back to execute judgment: "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

"Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you." God's chosen people have already been blessed by God, and God's blessing can preserve His chosen people from the harassment of the enemy. It was so for the people of Israel in the Old Testament, and it is the same for the church in the New Testament. Whoever blesses the church inherits the heavenly blessing along with it; whoever curses the church — that is, those who do not receive the gospel — they themselves will surely perish.

Dear brothers and sisters, a Gentile prophet, Balaam, with the Spirit of God coming upon him, could speak such a marvelous blessing; it was not only fulfilled upon the Israelites in the Old Testament, but is being fulfilled right now in the New Testament church life. We are a company even more blessed than Balaam: through believing in the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished, our sins are forgiven. Not only so, but we also have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who gives us eternal life. And this indwelling Holy Spirit is still, in our daily living, anointing God's will into us; this

is the teaching of the anointing spoken of in 1 John 2:27, “But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.”

Therefore, in our busy living, we must learn to press the pause button; to shut out all kinds of noisy voices, to become quiet, to listen to what the Holy Spirit says to us, and to learn to submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. If we can truly open our spiritual eyes, we will see a vision more beautiful and more glorious than what Balaam saw; and not only see it, but be experiencing it, as Hebrews 2:10 says, that Christ is leading many sons of God into glory.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You. We really did not know that through simple believing we would actually obtain such a great blessing. Not only are our sins forgiven, but we also have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who gives us eternal life, and the Holy Spirit will also lead us through our daily living. Lord, grant me spiritual understanding and a willing, submissive heart; that in daily life I may be able to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and be able to submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit, so that my daily life may be filled with peace and joy. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.