

LESSON #10

Donkeys and Divine Providence

God is sovereign over His entire creation.



Study at a Glance: The 5 W's

KEY AREA	DETAILS AND SUMMARY
WHO (Author & Audience)	Multiple authors, Moses, Zechariah and Matthew (traditionally believed to be the author)
WHAT (Core Message)	God can, has and will use anything he has created for his purpose. Humans, animals, even rocks if He so desires.
WHEN (Timing)	Written throughout Biblical history in the Old and New Testament. Jesus appears in both.
WHERE (Location)	The wilderness somewhere between Mount Sinai and the promised land (kingdom of Moab) and Bethsaida, Jerusalem.
WHY (Rationale)	God's unlimited power can be exercised through the most grand and famous of His creatures. We should notice that His choices tend to lean toward the lesser notable and least expected of his creation.

Introduction

Throughout scripture there are references to various animals which is not by accident. Every single creature God has created has a purpose in His divine plan for the world. Imagine an enormous jigsaw puzzle with every piece representing every creature God has created. The pieces would all fit together perfectly, forming a high-definition picture that connects everything for us all.



Key Terms defined

KEY TERM	<u>CONTEXTUAL</u> DEFINITION OF THE WORD	WORD IN GREEK LANGUAGE	PRONOUNCE THE GREEK WORD	SCRIPTURE REFERENCE
FOAL		<i>polos</i>	<i>poh-los</i>	Genesis 49:11
SEER		<i>mantis/manteis</i>	<i>man-tis</i>	1 Sam 9:18
PROVIDENCE		<i>pronoia</i>	<i>prono-ya</i>	<i>Captured in</i> Romans 8:28
HUMILITY		<i>tapeinophrosyne</i>	<i>tapy-inofro-sine</i>	Proverbs 22:4

Some facts about donkeys. They are not stubborn in the way many think they are. They are known to freeze or stand their ground when they are afraid or sense danger. In this case they will not move until they assess the risk and feel confident about moving. Like being “steadfast and unmovable”. Unlike horses and other animals that will run away when frightened, donkeys stay put, assess, decide. This is not being stubborn; it’s proceeding with caution. Donkeys are very loyal and dedicated animals. They bond quickly for life. They have an incredible memory which is recorded to go beyond 25 years; remembering people, animals and trails.

SECTION 1: BALAAM’S TALKING DONKEY

(Read Numbers 22:15-38)

Discussion Questions

1. **Text focus:** What did Balaam's frustration and anger stem from, what does it represent and is this a common issue for us today?
2. Who was Balaam referencing in Numbers 22: 8 and was this the same person in Numbers 22: 31-34?
3. **Application:** Balaam was focused on his destination and mission. So much so, that he did not have the ability to see the angel of the LORD when He was present. How serious is this and what advice can you give to others to avoid doing the same?
4. Quick side bar, what are your initial thoughts of the interaction in Numbers 22: 28-30?

More facts about donkeys. They display emotions like depression, stress and separation anxiety. They are one of the few animals that show emotional expression on their faces. Donkeys have an instinctive nature on farms and will act quickly to protect smaller, vulnerable animals. They will chase invasive animals away with extreme aggression.

SECTION 2: WHEN DONKEYS LEAD TO CROWNS

(Read 1 Samuel 9:1-20 & 10:1)

Discussion Questions

1. **Text Focus:** Like Balaam, Saul was focused on his mission, following his own plan. In both cases there was a donkey. Explain the divine role the donkey played in Saul's and Balaam's life?
2. **Application:** What stands out to you about God's use of a donkey in the process of revealing and ultimately anointing a king?
3. Do you believe delays and detours can sometimes be by God's divine action in our lives?

Even more facts about donkeys. They are excellent navigators with an incredible sense of smell and can detect water from miles away, which is helpful in desert regions. They are very strong pack animals able to carry very heavy loads for great distances. If taken on a new path, they will stop, assess and proceed with caution. The owner that knows his donkey knows patience.

SECTION 3: A DONKEY CARRIED THE MESSIAH

(Read Zecharia 9:9 & Matthew 21: 1-11)

Discussion Questions

1. Text Focus: In the case of Balaam, Saul and Jesus there was a donkey right at the intersection of divine purpose. What do these three instances demonstrate about God's providential method?

2. Application: Jesus entered Jerusalem showered with shouts of praise "Hosannah"-a triumphant entry. He entered the town riding a donkey that he called for. What is unusual about this and why would anyone consider this strange?

Conclusion: These stories remind us God is always in control. He's the writer, producer and director of all things on earth. He has full providence and sovereignty over His creation and can deploy it as he sees fit. Often, it will be in ways we least expect. Sometimes our role is to possess the instrument God will use for his purpose. It may not be in the spotlight, but it will be in faith and obedience which is of great importance. Remember, someone else had the donkey in Matt 21:2 & Mark 11:5-7..