

Numbers 22:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.

Analysis

Balak's message to Midian's elders uses the metaphor 'this company shall lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field.' This agricultural imagery portrays Israel as consuming everything in their path. The Hebrew *lachak* (lick up) suggests complete consumption. Ironically, Balak describes Israel exactly as God intended—a nation so blessed they would possess the land fully. What Balak feared, God had promised. This shows how God's promises to His people are threats to His enemies. Christ's kingdom similarly advances unstoppably (Daniel 2:44).

Historical Context

The alliance between Moab and Midian was unusual as these peoples were not typically united. Israel's presence created a coalition of enemies. The Midianites were descended from Abraham through Keturah (Genesis 25:1-2). The coalition shows how threats to the world system can temporarily unite otherwise diverse opponents, as seen in the alliance of Herod and Pilate against Jesus (Luke 23:12).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do God's promises to bless His people necessarily threaten opposing forces?
2. What does the formation of enemy coalitions teach about spiritual warfare?
3. How does Christ's advancing kingdom unite diverse opponents today?

Interlinear Text

אָמַר	לְמוֹאָב בֶּן	אֶל	זִקְנֵי י	מִדְיָן	עַתָּה	כָּלֵחַ
said	And Moab	H413	unto the elders	of Midian	H6258	lick up
H559	H4124		H2205	H4080		H3897
הַקָּהָל	אֶת	כָּל	סָבִיב יְבִית יֵנוּ	כָּלֵחַ	הַשׁ	וֹר
Now shall this company	H853	H3605	all that are round about	lick up	us as the ox	
H6951			H5439	H3897	H7794	
אֵת	רֶקֶם	הַשִּׂדֵּה	וּבָלָק	בֶּן	צִפּוֹר	לְמוֹאָב
H853	the grass	of the field	And Balak	the son	of Zippor	And Moab
	H3418	H7704	H1111	H1121	H6834	H4124
בְּעֵת	הַהוּא:					
at that time	H1931					
H6256						

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 31:8 (Kingdom): And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.