

Numbers 23:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said,
Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.

Analysis

God 'put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.' This demonstrates God's sovereign control over prophetic utterance—Balaam couldn't curse Israel even for payment because God controlled his speech. The phrase 'put a word in' indicates divine compulsion; Balaam became mouthpiece for God's blessing despite personal preference for Balak's reward.

Historical Context

This first oracle (vv.7-10) blessed Israel as numerous people dwelling securely, frustrating Balak's cursing request. Three more oracles would follow (23:18-24, 24:3-9, 24:15-24), each blessing Israel more emphatically than the previous.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's control over Balaam's words demonstrate His absolute protection of His people?

2. What does God forcing blessing through unwilling mouths teach about His sovereign purposes?

Interlinear Text

אָל שׁ וּבָ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלֹשֶׁן בְּפִי דָבָר יְהִי הַשְׁמָן
 put And the LORD a word mouth in Balaam's and said Return H413
 H7760 H3068 H1697 H6310 H1109 H559 H7725

תֹּדַבְּרָה בְּלֹאָק וְאַתָּה תֹּדַבְּרָה
 unto Balak and thus thou shalt speak H1111 H1696

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 1:9 (Word): Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

Deuteronomy 18:18 (Word): I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

Isaiah 59:21 (Word): As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

Isaiah 51:16 (Word): And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.

Numbers 23:16 (Word): And the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus.