

# Numbers 24:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.

## Analysis

**And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever**—Balaam's oracle ('לשון mashal, proverb/prophecy) against Amalek declares their status as **first of the nations** (ראשית גויים reshit goyim)—chronologically Israel's first enemy (Exodus 17:8-16), not greatest. The prophetic **latter end** (אחריתו acharito) promises complete destruction (עד adei oved, 'unto perishing').

This judgment fulfilled God's decree: 'I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven' (Exodus 17:14). Saul's incomplete obedience in executing this command cost him the kingdom (1 Samuel 15), while later Haman the Agagite (Amalekite descendant) nearly destroyed Jews in Persia (Esther 3-7). Amalek symbolizes perpetual opposition to God's people, ultimately destroyed in eschatological judgment.

## Historical Context

Amalek descended from Esau's grandson (Genesis 36:12) and attacked Israel's vulnerable rear guard at Rephidim (Deuteronomy 25:17-18). Their cowardly assault on weak and elderly Israelites earned divine decree of total extermination, making Balaam's prophecy confirmation of earlier judgment pronouncements.

## Related Passages

---

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

## Study Questions

---

1. How does Amalek's identity as 'first of nations' (chronologically first enemy, not greatest power) illustrate that opposition's timing matters less than its ultimate outcome?
2. What does Saul's failure to completely destroy Amalek (keeping Agag alive) teach about partial obedience in spiritual warfare?
3. How does Amalek's prophesied 'perishing forever' encourage believers facing persistent spiritual opposition?

## Interlinear Text

---

וַיַּרְא	וְיָמִן	אֶת	עַמְלֵךְ	קָרְבָּנָה	וְמִשְׁלָלָה	רַבָּה
<b>And when he looked</b>		H853	<b>Amalek</b>	he took up	<b>his parable</b>	<b>and said</b>
	H7200		H6002	H5375	H4912	H559
רָאשׁ יִתְהַלֵּךְ	גּוֹיִם	עַמְלֵךְ	וְאַפְרִית	עַד	וְאַפְרִית	רַבָּה
<b>was the first</b>	<b>of the nations</b>	<b>Amalek</b>	<b>but his latter</b>	<b>for ever</b>		
H7225	H1471	H6002	H319	H5703		
אָבֶן:						
<b>end shall be that he perish</b>						
	H8					

## Additional Cross-References

---

**Exodus 17:14** (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

