

Numbers 24:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.

Analysis

Balaam prophesies: 'Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.' This quotes God's Abrahamic covenant promise (Gen 12:3), confirming it remains in effect. The Hebrew parallelism emphasizes reciprocity - how nations treat Israel determines their blessing or curse. Throughout history, nations blessing Jews have prospered; those persecuting them have declined. This principle extends to the church - how people respond to God's people reveals their heart toward God. Christ identified Himself with believers so completely that serving them serves Him (Matt 25:40). Supporting God's kingdom work brings blessing; opposing it brings curse.

Historical Context

This blessing came in Balaam's fourth oracle after the Spirit came upon him (v.2). Balak's furious response (v.10-11) showed Balaam's oracles blessed Israel despite being hired to curse. The phrase echoing God's promise to Abraham demonstrated Israel's security rested in covenant, not current worthiness. History confirms the pattern - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Rome, Nazi Germany all fell after persecuting Jews; nations showing kindness prospered. The church inherits similar promises (Gal 3:29) - those blessing Christ's body participate in blessing; those opposing it face judgment. This doesn't mean uncritical support of all actions, but fundamental attitude toward God's covenant people.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do you treat God's people - with blessing and support, or criticism and opposition?
2. Does your attitude toward Christ's church reflect blessing or cursing, knowing this determines your own blessing?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא	יְמִית	אֵל	תִּ	וְלֹא	יְלִבּ	יָא	וְשָׁכַב	בְּ	וְשָׁכַב	עַ
He couched	he lay down	as a lion	and as a great lion		H4310	who shall stir him up				
H3766	H7901	H738	H3833							H6965
בָּרָךְ	בָּרָךְ	אָרָרָה:	אָרָרָה:							
Blessed	Blessed	is he that curseth	is he that curseth							
H1288	H1288	H779	H779							

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 12:3 (Blessing): And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 27:29 (Blessing): Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.

Genesis 49:9 (Parallel theme): Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

Numbers 23:24 (Parallel theme): Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

Matthew 25:45 (Parallel theme): Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

Matthew 25:40 (Parallel theme): And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org