

ISAIAH 15

AGAINST MOAB, PART 1

The nation of Moab was small, but it was a very fruitful land. We will recall from the Book of Ruth that Naomi and her family went to sojourn there when there was a famine in the land of Israel. This is the same country which Isaiah here speaks of, in this chapter and the next. He prophesies that their land would be wasted, but not entirely destroyed; for we find another prophecy of Moab's final ruin in Jeremiah 48, which was accomplished by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. This prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled within three years (chapter 16:14); and therefore, we may suppose that it was fulfilled in the devastations of that country by the army of the Assyrians, who enriched themselves with spoil and plunder from these areas for many years.

Isaiah probably did not go among the Moabites to preach this sermon; rather, it is likely that he delivered it to his own people. This was to show them that although judgment begins at the house of the Lord, it shall not end there. There is a Providence which governs the world and all its nations; and to the God of Israel, the worshipers of false gods would be held accountable to His judgments. This prophecy would also give the Lord's people a proof of His care for them and of His watchfulness over them, and it would convince them that He was indeed an enemy to their enemies – for the Moabites had often been enemies to them. Additionally, the accomplishment of this prophecy within three short years would be a confirmation of the prophet's mission, as well as of the truth of all his other prophecies; and it would serve as an encouragement to God's faithful children to depend upon the truth of his words.

Concerning Moab, Isaiah foretold that their chief cities – Ar and Kir – would be taken by surprise, in a night, by the enemy. In the night when these two cities were taken, it was like the whole nation of Moab being cut off; for the seizing of them laid the whole country open, and made all the wealth of it an easy prey to the victorious army. But the Moabites – being put hereby into the utmost consternation imaginable – would go to their idols for relief, and pour out their tears before them (verse 2). Should not people who are in distress seek the Lord Jesus? Before His throne of grace, we shall not shed such useless and profitless tears as the Moabites did before their idols!

The prophet says that there would be the voice of universal grief all over the country, and he describes it here very touchingly. Moab would be a valley of tears – a little map of what this whole world is like. They would pull out their hair in grief, to such a degree that all their heads would be bald; and they would cut off their beards, according to the customary expressions of mourning in those

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ A great lamentation is made by the Moabites themselves, and also by the prophet for them – verses 1-5
- ❖ The great calamities that would justify that lamentation – verses 6-9

times and countries. When they went out and about, they would dress themselves in rough sackcloth (verse 3). And when they come home, instead of applying themselves to their business, they would go up to the tops of their houses (which were flat-roofed) and weep abundantly there. In fact, they would howl and cry out to their idols. And then they would come down weeping just as much as they did when they went up. Prayer to our living God is heart's ease (1 Sam. 1:18), but prayers to false gods are not.



As if all of this was not bad enough, the courage of the Moabite militia would also fail them. Although they were brave soldiers and were well-armed, yet they would cry out and shriek for fear. And every one of them would have his life become grievous to him, even though soldiers are typically accustomed to living in danger (verse 4). They would be so overwhelmed with grief that life itself would be a burden to them. See how easily God can weaken the stoutest of men, and deprive a nation of the benefits of those whom it most depended upon for strength and defense!

The outcry for these calamities would spread grief to all places which bordered Moab (verse 5). Even the prophet himself has very sensible impressions made upon his spirit by the prediction of these things. "My heart shall cry out for Moab," he says. Although they were enemies to Israel, they were still his fellow human beings. It should grieve us to see anyone in such deep distress. It is most fitting for God's people to be of a tender spirit, and not desire the woeful day. It is good for them to be like their Master, Who wept over Jerusalem, even when He gave her up to ruin; and like their God, Who desires not the death of sinners.

In verses 6-9, the prophet further describes the woeful lamentations that would be heard throughout all the country of Moab, when it became a prey to the Assyrian army. Where sin has been general, and all flesh have corrupted their ways, what can be expected but a general desolation? The country would be plundered and impoverished, and all the wealth and substance of it would be swept away by the victorious army. Moreover, the inhabitants of the country would be slain in such great numbers that their rivers and lakes would be discolored with blood. Some of the Moabites would flee and make their escape, while others would sit still as a remnant in the land; but upon both of them, God would bring lions and beasts of prey, which would glean up those who had escaped the sword of the enemy. Those who continue impenitent in sin are preserved from one judgment, but they are only reserved for another. Let us ask the Lord for grace that we may not be such! May we cry out to the true and living God for humility under His chastening hand, and for grace to return to Him from Whom we have sadly departed.

We cry out to You, O true and living God, and beseech You to cause us to be humble under Your chastisements, and to return to Your open arms of mercy! Amen.