

ISAIAH 16

AGAINST MOAB, PART 2

This chapter is a continuation and conclusion of Isaiah's prophecy against the land of Moab, which was begun in the last chapter. There is something very awful in the thought of the entire desolation of a thriving, prosperous country. Imagine, for instance, our own beloved land – with all its fertile fields and busy towns – converted into a wilderness, over which a traveler might wander without being able to discern even a trace of its former glory. Perhaps we think such a change an impossibility, but thus probably thought the Moabites when Isaiah uttered his warning to them. Let us remember and apply our Savior's words in Luke 13: "Those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!"

In verses 1-3, Isaiah calls upon Moab, in her distress, to look unto Him Who alone could save her – namely, Jesus Himself, the One Who would sit upon the throne of David. And in the circumstance that Moab would neglect his advice, the prophet predicts her total ruin. We will recall that in the days of David, Moab was under tribute to Israel and brought gifts (2 Sam. 8:2). But by Isaiah's time, Moab had withdrawn this allegiance to God's people; and so he admonished them to revive this payment. King Mesha of Moab had paid this tribute to King Ahab of Israel in the form of lambs (2 Kings 3:4), and the prophet recommends them to do so now. But there is a spiritual lesson of a much higher nature which is here intended by the prophet's directions to Moab! The Northern Kingdom of Israel was about to go into captivity, and Moab was also under the heavy displeasure of the Lord. "Now," says the prophet to Moab, "send the lamb for an offering in sacrifice – with an eye to Christ the Lamb, the perfect Sacrifice! Send it to the mount of Zion. Seek pardon and peace through the blood of the Lamb! And as a token of your repentance before God, be kind and affectionate to the Lord's people. Otherwise, Moab will be utterly spoiled, scattered, and driven away like a wandering bird!"

Verses 4 and 5 are beautiful verses, and they are also full of Gospel! The Lord advised Moab to give shelter to the outcasts of His people. As the nation of Israel was being taken into captivity by the Assyrians, the remnant that managed to flee were outcasts; but they were still the Lord's people. Moab was advised to take in the Lord's outcasts, and to give them a welcome in the day of their calamity. And the motives for doing so are here given: "In mercy shall the throne be established" – that is, Jesus, the descendant of David, will set up His

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *The prophet counsels the Moabites to reform their ways, and especially to be kind to God's people – verses 1-5*
- ❖ *He fears that they will not listen to his counsel, and so he foretells the lamentable devastation of their country – verses 6-14*

throne in mercy; and the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, shall partake of the blessings which will flow from His throne. Therefore, this is a recommendation for the Moabites to seek the favor of this Almighty King by being kind to the King's people. Truly, this advice remains good in all ages, and among all nations!



Pride seems to have been one great cause of Moab's punishment (verse 6); and another cause, as we may gather from Zephaniah 2:10, was their unkind spirit toward the people of God. This spirit was strongly manifested at a very early period, when King Balak of Moab sent for the false prophet Balaam to come and curse the Israelites (Num. 22:6). We all know the outcome of this venture, and how God overruled Balaam's speech so that he blessed the Israelites whom he had been hired to curse. In fact, he did more than merely bless Israel, for he also distinctly foretold the destruction of Moab (Num. 24:17): "There shall come forth a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab." This prophecy was partially fulfilled by David (2 Sam. 8:2), who smote the Moabites and forced them to become tributaries. But it evidently has reference to the final destruction of their nation; and ultimately, it has an even bigger application than that! For the Star out of Jacob and the Scepter out of Israel can be none other than Christ the Messiah – under Whose feet, not only Moab, but *all* His enemies will be crushed and smitten!

Even amidst all the threatenings with which these last two chapters have been filled, there is still that promise of mercy standing out for sinners – upon which any believing soul might rest, and in which it could rejoice: "In mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness" (verse 5). Many Moabites would have found an immediate fulfillment of these words in the reign of righteous King Hezekiah of Judah, whose protection they might have sought from the oppression of their Assyrian invaders. But as we have already mentioned, the expressions in this verse carry our thoughts onward to the Kingship of our Lord Jesus! Against all the ungodly, He will execute righteous judgment. When the wicked are destroyed, our Savior's throne shall be established; and although He hastens righteousness and seeks judgment, yet it is in mercy that His throne shall be established! That throne is the mercy-seat – the place where mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other! (Ps. 85:10) Jesus endured all the punishment of our sin, in order that He might be a righteous Redeemer, as well as a merciful one. Let us cast ourselves upon His faithfulness and love! Then, whatever judgments may come upon the world at large, or whatever afflictions may come upon us in particular, He will be our refuge and hiding-place from the spoiler! (verse 4)

Lord Jesus, we praise You for establishing Your throne in mercy, and for paying the price of our sin; for You are both a righteous and a merciful Redeemer! Amen.