

Isaiah 15-16:1-13

"Suffering, Sin And Sorrow"

As Isaiah prophesies in our present passage, war clouds are gathering in the north. The Assyrian army is mobilizing, they're preparing to move out in an effort to conquer the known world... But what they don't realize is that God is using them as *His* instrument of judgment upon the nations... & Not only will God use them to bring judgment to *several nations around* Israel, they'll also bring judgment *upon* Israel to the north & in part, Judah to the south. Then, they themselves will be judged by God as well.

God will bring every tribe, every tongue & every nation to account. – There are times it seems as though wickedness will never end. It's just going to carry on forever. But God assures us that when a man, or a people, or a nation (through sin) fills up the wine cup of His wrath, He will press it to their lips & force them to drink it down to the dregs. Don't be deceived, God will not be mocked, whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

In Ch's 15-16, Isaiah prophesies against Moab (modern day Jordan). In Ch 17, Syria comes into focus. (That may be a bit confusing because they sound similar. But be aware, Syria & Assyria are two different nations.)

Vs 1

Ar & Kir are cities in the region of Moab that Isaiah is prophesying will be utterly leveled. & I think sometimes we can have that sense of being 2 degrees (or perhaps 20 degrees) removed from these situations when we read them & that's why we can just hear it, move past it & that's that. But Isaiah informs us, it's a "burden". We've spoken of this before. It's a heavy word that is hard for him to bear & to share.

Think perhaps, "St. Louis of Missouri is laid waste & destroyed, in the night K.C. is laid waste, Springfield & Joplin will wail & cry out, everyone will weep bitterly!" For Isaiah, it wasn't some far away distant land, it was in his backyard (so to speak).

Now, we've spoken of Babylon, we've made mention of the Philistines. Who is Moab? The story of Moab was born out of tragedy (on more than 1 level). The Moabites were actually related to the Israelites in that Moab was the son of Lot who was Abraham's nephew.

Perhaps you can recall, or are at least familiar w/the story of Sodom & Gomorrah? – God sent a couple of angels to rescue Lot & his family from the city before He destroyed it & as you know his wife turned around, looking back on what she'd lost & was turned to a pillar of salt! (What's the lesson? When God delivers you out of the world, don't look back. Nothing good comes of looking back on the life you left behind. [Chasing that "What if" trail]. When we grab hold of the plow, we're to move straight ahead.)

Be that as it may, Lot took refuge w/his daughters in a cave up in the Mts & his daughters thinking perhaps they were the last living souls on earth got their dad drunk (twice) & slept w/him so that they each became pregnant. One of those children was Ammon (who became the father of the Ammonites) & the other child was Moab (who became the father of the Moabites).

& On the one hand history would prove that the Moabites would contend w/Israel, they would be great enemies of Israel. It was the Moabite king (Balak) who hired Balaam the prophet (Num 22) to try & curse Israel in their wilderness wanderings because they were worried that they would come in & utterly consume all their resources, being so numerous. Of course, it didn't work because God was for them. (& If God is for you, who can be against you?) But what he *did* do was teach them how invoke God's judgment upon them by sending the Moabite women into their camp to seduce them.

During the time of the *judges*, another Moabite king (Eglon) would oppress Israel for 18 yrs. King Saul would contend w/the Moabites, David defeated Moab... But Solomon would be persuaded by his wives to build an altar to Moab's god (Chemosh/Molech). So, there was some real historical *contention* between Israel & Moab. But on the other hand, there was a strange historical *connection* between Israel & Moab.

As I already mentioned, they were related to Israel by the fact that Lot was Abraham's nephew. Abraham was Isaac's dad. Isaac was Jacob's dad & God changed Jacob's name to... Israel. So, there was some relation there. & God told Moses that they weren't to take Moab's land because He'd given it to them being Lot's descendants.

But even beyond that, Israel's greatest king (David) was $\frac{1}{4}$ Moabite. His grandmother was a Moabitess. Her name was... Ruth (as in the book of Ruth). In fact, when David was living as a fugitive (fleeing from Saul), he took his mom & dad into the territory of Moab, spoke to the king of Moab & placed them under his protection until he knew how things would turn out.

So, there's both contention & connection between Israel & Moab. So there's a little different flavor in Isaiah's writing here. W/the Babylonians, though the word was heavy, he just shot it straight. W/Moab, there's empathy, his heart breaks for what's to come upon them. The destruction that will level them.

Vs 2-4

The picture here is one of utter desperation & helplessness. In Vs 2 he says, "They'll run up to the temple, to the high places to weep..."

I've mentioned this to you before in passing, but, to make it a bit more formal, *you're perhaps familiar w/the psalm that reads, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth."¹ The psalmist isn't saying that he's lifting his eyes up to God (though it paints a beautiful poetic picture in our minds, that's not where he's going w/that). He's comparing/contrasting truth & lie. In the ancient world, the pagans would build altars up on hilltops, on high places, they thought it made them closer to their gods. That's where they would go when they needed help. – But the psalmist is saying, "I look up there to the hills, but that's *not* where *my* help comes from. My help comes from the *Lord*, the One who *made those hills*, the Creator of heaven & earth!" Question: where does *your* help come from in time of need? Where do you run, to whom do you turn?█

Up on those hills, those high places are false hopes. & Isaiah is saying, "They run to their high places, they'll be weeping & crying out to their idols & pagan gods for protection, but to no avail!" "They can chant/weep & sacrifice, shave their heads & wear sackcloth all they want, Chemosh can't help them! They're looking the wrong way!" **When people's lives are falling apart, when their world comes crashing in, it's not uncommon for them to get real religious. But false worship, getting "spiritual" won't help. People seem to want to turn to anything &/or anyone other than the Lord. I'll seek help anywhere but in J.C. ... Why is it that people will so often endure such radical hardship rather than repent?**

Now, there's another prophet who prophesies concerning Moab as well. It's the prophet Jeremiah, & he speaks to one reason that judgment is comes to Moab. Keep your finger here & turn to **Jeremiah 48** Vs 11-13.

Do you understand what God is saying here? What's all this talk of "settling on his dregs" & "not being emptied from vessel to vessel"? The image that the Lord is drawing on here is of the ancient process of refining & purifying wine... & What they would do would be to put the wine in a vessel & then just let it sit. & As it sat there, over time, the dregs, the impurities would eventually sink & settle to the bottom. Then, they would carefully pour the wine *out* of that vessel *into* another vessel & repeat the process... You would do this again & again & in the end you would wind up w/a very pure, very fine wine.

But timing was everything. It was a very delicate process/procedure. Because if you let it settle *too long*, then the wine would begin to take on the flavor of the dregs, those impurities & your entire batch would be ruined.

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ps 121:1-2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

So, what is God saying here? He's saying that Moab has gotten accustomed to relative ease. He's "settled on his dregs" he's just sitting there soaking in impurities & he's taken on the "flavor" & the "scent" of those impurities... What's God's solution? "I will send him wine-workers who will tip him over & empty his vessels..." It's as though God is saying, "Moab, I gave you time to seek Me. I gave you time to turn to Me, but rather than seeking to grow &/or draw near to Me, you got comfortable, you decided to stay right where you were at. So I'm going to take this process out of your hands, & I'm going to pour you out..."

*God has this way of refining us, of "inspiring us" to consider *His* way. Here's the short lesson. Be careful of growing too comfortable, of "settling in" & not seeking to grow in your relationship w/God. I'm not saying seasons of reprieve aren't a blessing from the Lord. I'm saying that growing comfortable (being at ease) can be indicative of settling on the dregs & can create a snare in our lives... **If we just sort of settle in, quit seeking the Lord, we begin to take on the flavor of the impurities around us, & God will send in the "wine-workers." He will tip us over, pour us out from vessel to vessel that He might refine & purify our hearts/lives...** So, if things seem a bit "unsettled" right now, & as a result you've been praying & seeking the Lord more & more... No it's not fun, but you should thank God for that. He loves you. He's refining you, He's causing you to draw *near* to Him, to seek *after* Him & He's purifying your life. *

Vs 5-7

I trust you can see/sense the total destruction that's coming upon Moab. Back in Vs 4 Isaiah said that even the soldiers will be weeping because they're unable to help in anyway. Everyone will be fleeing... **& Not only will there be annihilation militarily, but their resources *naturally* would be depleted & diminished... The waters desolate, the green grass (in which flocks would graze) withered. & In Vs 7 it's the picture of fleeing refugees just grabbing what they can carry & running for their lives...**

What I want you to take home from this section is found in Vs 5. "My heart will cry out for Moab; his fugitives flee to Zoar." (Point of interest, Zoar is the city Lot fled from when he & his daughters escaped to the mountains where Moab was born).

But what I want you to pick up on is the fact that we should have a heart for the lost. "My hear will cry out for Moab." Those who are under the heavy hand of God's judgment need our prayers, our compassion, our empathy.

It's weird how some people seem to get some kind of perverse pleasure in making sure that people know they're headed for hell. You see preachers like this, people on street corners yelling things like that, billboards that inform people of that... Is that the heart of God? What's the Bible say? Ezek 33, *"As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.'"*²

That's the heart of God. Jesus came *not to send people to* hell, but to save people *from* hell. God's not willing that *any* should perish but that *all* should come to repentance... God help us to share *His* heart, for the lost. *

Vs 8-9

This talk of the cry going around the borders of Moab. The idea is that everyone will see it, everyone will know what's going on & that' God's judgment is upon them. If they escape the armies, they faced famine, if they got through that, lions would be waiting. What's the point? There's no escape from the heavy hand of God's judgment... *There's no escaping the ramifications of your own ways... Don't be deceived, whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. & You can be sure (Num 32:23) your sin will find you out. Listen, we can't "get away" w/it. The only solution is to be cleansed of it by the blood of J.C.*

Ch 16

Vs 1-2

W/this phrase, "send the lamb to the ruler of the land" Isaiah is calling on Moab reinstitute paying tribute to Judah & coming under the covering of Israel. I mentioned that David had subdued the Moabites & in 2nd Sam you discover he forced them to pay tribute. *Under Ahab, the Moabites would regularly render 100,000 lambs (2 Kings 3:4-5) to the nation. It essentially served as taxation to keep them on Israel's good side. But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled & ceased paying the tribute. Isaiah is saying, "You need to resume it". The basic gist is, "Come under our covering, come to our God, cease looking to your own idols."* – The idea behind this, "wandering bird thrown out of the nest" is this picture of vulnerability, helplessness & confusion. That's how Moab will feel under the hand of God's judgment. Their only hope would be to align themselves w/Jerusalem, it's king & their God.

Vs 3

Here we're seeing the compassion of the prophet again. Isaiah addresses Judah.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Eze 33:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“Hide the outcasts, do not betray him who escapes.” He’s saying, “If a Moabite makes it this far in their fleeing, don’t turn them away.” He’s calling for Judah to be a place of refuge, protection & compassion.

& This is exactly how the church should be when people come seeking refuge among God’s people from the ramifications of their own ways. They’ve erred, or they’ve rebelled, they may not be able to articulate it this way, but they feel the weight of the heavy hand of God’s judgment upon them so they come & they’re looking for reprieve, a place of refuge. They don’t know what to do... The church should be a place that receives “the outcasts”, that doesn’t “betray him who escapes” but leads them in repentance toward God & faith toward J.C.

Vs 4-5

We’ve mentioned again & again the principle of prophetic telescoping in our study of the prophets. How that in the course of a single Vs the prophet can jump 100’s if not 1,000s of year & then snap right back to their historical setting. & We’ve given illustrations in the past, time forbids us to now, but this is one of those instances.

It’s kind of mind blowing how that Isaiah is pleading w/Judah to receive the outcasts of Moab & then turns right around & writes, “Let My outcasts dwell w/you O Moab; Be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler...” The gist is, “Moab needs refuge now; Israel will need refuge later. We’ll receive you now, you receive us then.”

This mention of “the spoiler” is (I believe) a reference to the A.C. & The Bible is clear that after the rapture of the church, at the signing of the peace agreement w/Israel (Daniel 9:27) God will resume the final 7 yr period determined upon the nation of Israel (Daniel 9:24).

But 3 ½ yrs into this covenant, the A.C. will break the covenant. Paul told the Thessalonians (2 Thess 2:3-4) that this man (the son of perdition, the beast, the spoiler... the Bible has many names for him, the most popular is the antichrist) will enter the temple claiming to *be* God & demanding to be worshiped *as* God. It’s what Jesus referred to as the “abomination that causes desolation”. Keep your finger here & let’s leave one more time, turn to **Matthew 24:15-22**

So, when this man (the A.C.) commits this blasphemy, he will unleash a torrent of persecution upon the Jews unlike the world has ever seen. That’s why Jesus said, “Don’t go back in your house, don’t return home from work, just run!” & This place Isaiah mentions here in Vs 1 of Ch 16 (Sela =Rock) is the rock city Petra.

That's why many people (& I believe it's solid rationale) believe (together w/Rev 12:14) that many of the Jews will take shelter in the rock city of Petra from that time until Jesus returns & establishes His throne upon the earth. Which is what Isaiah is referencing in Vs 5 (Read).

Vs 6-8

Remember when I spoke to you of the relative comfort of Moab in our reference in Jeremiah? Here God gives us the initial reason that judgment will find them. Pride. 4xs in Vs 6 we see pride, proud, haughtiness & pride.

God is faithful to confront us w/our sin. Confrontation is something that a lot of people struggle with. God has no problem with it. He says, "Hey, here's the problem!" & W/that, not only do we know exactly why judgment is coming, but we also have an opportunity to repent.

God used the illustration of purifying wine in Jeremiah 48. Moab took great pride in their vineyards, but God would see to it that everything they took pride in would be destroyed. If we won't humble ourselves, then God will see to it that we are humbled.

Vs 9-12

Again, Isaiah is faithful to the message, judgment is coming. Destruction is inevitable. But there's no perverse pleasure in his proclamation, his heart is broken for what's to become them. & Here we see an added element of grief. *Look at Vs 12 (read).

This is that heart rending reality of seeing people grope for some kind of reprieve but looking for answers in the wrong place. They go "to their sanctuary to pray, but do not prevail."

You're watching your friend, or work associate, or perhaps your child go through such turbulence, such tribulation, such desperation, heartache & heart break, & they're going to *this place* or *that person*, maybe they're looking to the bottom of a bottle or relationship after relationship, or they even try religion, but they do not prevail... Because they won't turn to the Lord. It's not going to work if you keep trying things *your way*, you've got to come *God's way*. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."³ God has made it clear. Don't waste your time going down dead-end roads, come to J.C. God has made it as simple as possible, only 1 way, you can't mess up & take a wrong turn or miss a detail, believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved. *

³ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [In 14:6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 13-14 (Close)

Again, this is the mercy of God. He's telling them when the judgment will come & that only a small remnant would even *survive*... Translation? *Now* is the time to get right w/God! The crazy thing is that w/in 100 yrs or so (which was when Jeremiah would be prophesying), they would be settled right back into their wicked ways again...

*You've heard the phrase something to the effect, "Those who don't learn from history are condemned to repeat it." We see this all the time. Someone going through a rough season, they seem to come to their senses, start seeking the Lord, turning from sin. – Then as their life begins to lighten up, they drift right back into those same patterns that got them there in the 1st place. God would have us learn our lesson & bring forth fruit that *remains*, don't repeat the past sin, repent. Draw near *to* God, & press *forward* in the grace of God. *

Prayer Points:

God, having grabbed hold of the plow, may we never turn back & never even *look* back. But may we keep our eyes fixed firmly on You. Give us a heart for the lost & help us that we not grow too comfortable, but that we keep growing, keep going, keep moving forward *in* You, seeking *after* You, that our lives might bring glory to Your name.

It's not God's heart that any should perish. Yes, His righteousness demands justice, but His grace offers forgiveness of sin, reconciliation to God through faith in J.C. Don't try to do it your way, come His way. Jesus died on the cross for your sin, He rose from the dead for your justification. Believe on Him & be saved.