

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #24

Isaiah 15:1-16:14

If an individual or a nation finds itself surrounded by dark and threatening things and if the individual or nation refuses to turn to God and chooses to govern itself by its own feelings, that person, that nation is heading to disaster.

If you are a child of God here today and your world begins to cave in and you refuse to turn to God, but choose to run your life by your feelings and your emotions, life for you will not be happily ever after. If ever there is a passage of Scripture that teaches this principle, it is **Isaiah 15-16**.

We come now to the prophetic threat or the oracle against Moab, which is modern day Jordan. Isaiah predicts a time in which every person in Moab will be wailing because of the devastation God will have caused. The reason for the devastation is that they refuse to turn to Him for help. Many of the things predicted in these chapters partially occurred when the Assyrians started wiping out the Moabites within three years after Isaiah made the prediction. However, the total humiliation and destruction described here has some very specific prophetic ramifications for the Great Tribulation.

F. C. Jennings asked a very important question when he asked what possible practical value could there be to us reading about a nation that has long ceased to exist? How possibly could this affect us (*Studies in Isaiah*, p. 196)? The answer is, this is more than just reading Arab history; all that is predicted here hasn't happened yet and even though "competent scholars" may differ, there are some key prophetic things described here that are yet to occur. **The Moabites (Jordanians) are Abraham's relatives**. The Moabites came from Lot and those Arab relatives are still in existence. Harry Bultema said, back in 1923, that a number of recent expositors saw these predictions as having clear connections to the Great Tribulation and were "totally in accordance with the nations of prophecy" (*Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 180).

For many years, including to this very day, Moab (Jordan) has been an enemy of Israel and an idolatrous God-mocking nation (Numbers 25:1-3). She has never been Israel's trusted friend. During the days when Israel was in the wilderness, it was Moabite women who seduced Israel's men (Numbers 31:15-17). During the days of the Judges, the Moabites oppressed Israel for 18 years (Judges 3:12-14). During the days of Israel's kings, King Saul fought against the Moabites (I Samuel 14:47) and King David defeated the Moabites (II Samuel 8:2, 12). But Solomon built an altar to Moab's "god" Chemosh because he was influenced by his Moabite wives (I Kings 11:7-8).

In our day, Jordan is at the center of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Ever since an agreement was made between Jordan and Israel in 1994 called the "Washington Declaration," a supposed formal cooperation exists between the Jews and the Arabs as long as Israel promises to respect and give priority to their idolatrous Muslim holy shrines in Jerusalem (Dore Gold, *The Fight For Jerusalem*, p. 268).

Isaiah saw a time when God gets fed up with Moab and all the Arabs in the land are wailing. In fact, in **chapter 15**, there are at least 12 specific references to these Arabs weeping and crying and shedding tears (**15:2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 5, 5, 8, 8, 8**) because of the devastation God has sent to

their land. If these Arabs would turn to God, He would do some wonderful things for them; but because they refuse to turn to Him, He will cause their world to cave in and then destroy them.

The prophetic prediction Isaiah makes is this:

IN THE END GOD WILL DESTROY JORDAN AND ALL ARABS WILL WAIL BECAUSE THEY REFUSE TO FLEE TO THE GOD OF ISRAEL, JESUS CHRIST, THE ONE WHO WILL SIT ON DAVID'S THRONE, AND IN THE END ONLY A VERY SMALL REMNANT WILL SURVIVE.

If people refuse to turn to the Lord, God can and will track them down. If along the way they turn to the Lord, the end will not be disastrous.

What Israel needs to know is that there is coming a day when Jordan will be looking to Israel for help. She will be fleeing to Israel because she will know God is judging her.

In **Isaiah 16:14**, Isaiah predicts that the things described here would happen in three years. This has caused some debate among scholars as to when this would actually happen. Some have suggested that this could be a reference to Tiglath-Pileser's coming invasion of Moab in 732 B.C. after he invaded Syria. Some have suggested that it is a prediction that in three years Sennacherib would attack her in 701 B.C. Both of these would be legitimate three year episodes that could be literally seen by the people. **But we may also suggest, in view of some of the things predicted, that three years into the Tribulation Jordan will be reduced to nothing.**

Now there are some amazing predictions made against Moab:

PREDICTION #1 – Moab's main cities will be destroyed quickly. **15:1-4**

I want you to observe when devastating things that can ruin you occur - when things are dark, "in a night."

Isaiah says later that "Moab will be trodden down" (Isaiah 25:10). Jeremiah says "no city will escape; "the valley also will be ruined, and the plateau will be destroyed" (Jeremiah 48:8). Ar and Kir mentioned in **verse 1** had been destroyed in Isaiah's time and no one even knows where these cities were actually located. Many suggest they were located at the south end of the Dead Sea.

However, some of the other cities mentioned here are still in existence and have not been destroyed. Dibon in **verse 2** is modern day Dhiban. Nebo in **verse 2** is modern day Khirbet Ayn Musa. Medeba in **verse 2** is modern day Madaba. Heshbon and Elealeh in **verse 4** sat at the north end of Moab.

Now **verse 3** shows precisely what happens when one refuses to turn to God; you end up humiliated and you will have eyes that flow tears.

What is described here is that people in Jordan are wailing because all their main cities are fallen. Instead of turning to God, they are wailing over their cities. J. Vernon McGee said that when he visited Amman, Jordan he had a very funny feeling, as if God's judgment was still on that place (*Thru the Bible*, Vol. 3, p. 237). The reason for the feeling is that it is and will be.

You will notice from **verse 2**, what these Arabs do when this goes down; they run to their “temple” which is a Muslim temple and worship and mourn and pray to no avail. They build their false temples on a “high place” such as the Dome of the Rock, and they run to their false system of religion when things begin to fall apart.

When life begins to fall apart, the one place to run is to the Lord.

PREDICTION #2 – Moab’s people will flee quickly. **15:5-9**

In **verse 5** we get a look at the heart of Isaiah; he cried about what he saw. Isaiah reveals to us the heart of God. God takes no pleasure in destroying people for their evil sin. He desires that they turn to Him for His grace and mercy. He weeps for those who do not. **God cries out to people in trouble, “Please turn to Me the true God,” but because they refuse they end up weeping.**

Isaiah saw the Moabites fleeing as fugitives on the run. Many of the cities named here have not been precisely identified, but the waters of Nimrim (**verse 6**) probably refer to the Wadi en-Numeirah in southern Moab.

But notice **verse 7**; no matter what hits them they still rely on themselves. They are on the run from a judgment and they carry what they can and rely on themselves, even though **verse 8** says there is distress at every border.

Water is a real problem even to this day as 90 percent of Jordan is a desert and Isaiah saw a time when the people were fleeing, but when they got to the water spots, there was no water; in fact, the “waters of Dimon are full of blood” (**verse 9**). But her trouble is not over for she will be chased like a lion chases its prey.

PREDICTION #3 – Moab’s people will find protection in Israel. **16:1-5**

The one place that Assyria could not conquer was Jerusalem. If the people would just turn to God, they could find His grace, His mercy and His help. If Arabs would be willing to send a lamb to Jerusalem (**verse 1**) and would acknowledge that they needed their sin washed away, they would find the protection of God. But instead of these fugitives fleeing west to Israel for help, they fled south. J. Vernon McGee said he actually crossed the “fords of the Arnon” which he said wasn’t much of a river at all (*Isaiah*, Vol. 3, p. 238).

Now carefully observe that according to **verse 5**, there has been a Davidic throne established in Jerusalem. This is a clear reference that when this happens the temple will be up. We know from Revelation 11:1 that there will be sacrifices made including a lamb.

Now if we calculate this in light of the three year prediction, we may assume that we are three years into the Tribulation (**Isaiah 16:14**). What this means is that we have six months before the time of Jacob’s trouble actually begins. Jerusalem and Israel will be a relatively protected place for the first 3½ years of the Tribulation due to a peace treaty that was made with her by the Antichrist. So when the Arabs of Jordan are attacked, they ought to acknowledge God and turn to Him and to Jerusalem for help. **But she will not do it; her pride will not let her.**

The very Jews they have hated will be the only people in the world who can protect them. Sela (**verse 1**) was located about 50 miles south of Moab's southern border. But they could not find deliverance in a wilderness or a mountain; there was only one place they could find help. They must flee to Jerusalem, the daughter of Zion (**1:8**). It will be the Arab women who will beg for help and protection (**16:2-4**). It will be the Arab women who will beg her leaders to turn to the Lord for help. But the Arab men will not listen. They are stubborn and arrogant and proud and the Jordanians will go down.

It is very possible that some of these Moabite women will remember the one Moabite woman who actually so desired to connect with Israel that she ended up in the lineage line of Jesus Christ. Her name, of course, was Ruth (**Matthew 1:5**). More than likely, the reason God will permit any of them to survive is because they are connected to David and to Jesus Christ.

PREDICTION #4 – Moab's pride will refuse to turn to God or Israel. **16:6-12**

Warren Wiersbe made an interesting observation when he said you could perhaps understand this pride if Moab (the Jordanians) were a big impressive power like the Babylonians; but they aren't (*Be Comforted*, p. 49).

The truth is even today the Jordanians really have nothing to be proud about. Their whole land looks like a poverty-stricken barren desert. Even Amman, the capital of Jordan, has seen a steady decline in sources of revenue and Jordan is totally dependent on foreign aid from her Arab friends for her survival, especially from Egypt and Iraq. It is hard to imagine that people like that, who are basically taking handouts, could be so proud. **But Arabs are proud and it will be their pride that will lead them to their defeat and destruction.** The Jordanians are so arrogant and proud that they will not turn to God or Israel for help no matter what God does, so the end result will be every person will wail because of the judgment and destruction of God.

When people become so proud and haughty that they refuse to turn to the Lord God of the Bible for help when their whole world is collapsing, they deserve what they get.

PREDICTION #5 – Moab will have only a remnant left in existence. **16:13-14**

When the dust of the Tribulation settles, a very small remnant of Arabs will be left in existence. But as **Isaiah 16:14** says, they will be impotent with no power at all.

The parallel prophecy that deals with this very destruction of Jordan is Jeremiah 48. In that chapter Jeremiah says that Moab will be "destroyed from being a people" (48:42). It is also revealed that there will be a few "fugitives" who will survive (48:45).

In fact, God will restore some of the captives at the end of the Tribulation. Daniel suggests that a few Jordanians will survive the Tribulation and the onslaught of the Antichrist (Daniel 11:41).

Now why will God cause all of these terrible things to happen to Jordan? Because she has mocked God and she has mocked Israel (Jeremiah 48:27). She has made a laughingstock of God's nation. She will be destroyed for that reason.

Those militant Islamic Jordanians will eventually pay a very severe price. God will demolish them all.