

JEREMIAH 48

AGAINST THE MOABITES

The prophet's next words concerning one of Judah's heathen neighbors was against the nation of Moab. The Moabites occupied the territory east of the Dead Sea. They were in hostility to the Israelites from the earliest times; and they continued to be their enemies (with a few brief intervals excepted), even up to the time in which Jeremiah lived. The history of this people is full of interest, but our main intention in this chapter is to dwell upon this prophecy concerning them. The prophets Amos (2:1-3) and Isaiah (chapters 15-16) had already predicted the destruction of this nation. And now those ancient prophecies – as well as Jeremiah's own predictions – were about to be fulfilled by the invasion of their land by the Babylonians. Many of the thoughts in this chapter seem to be echoes of the words of the other two aforementioned prophets, but they are here uttered in the peculiar style of the “weeping prophet.” He pours forth a torrent of overwhelming words which display strong emotions of both anger and grief.

The chief cities of the Moabites are spoken of as being laid waste (verses 1-5), and their inhabitants are summoned to flee for their lives. But it was all in vain; for even their idol Chemosh was doomed to go into captivity, and all their cities would become a desolation (verses 6-10). In verses 11-13, the general character of the inhabitants of the land of Moab is depicted in a striking figure. He “has been at ease from his youth,” says the prophet. He is like spoiled wine that has not been poured from vessel to vessel, to prevent the dregs from settling down; and so it has undergone no change of taste or fragrance. Such wine would be utterly worthless; but the days were coming when the stagnation of Moab would be broken, and he would be put to shame by the very god Chemosh in which he trusted. It is not good for either nations or individuals to be subject to no changes, and to experience no conflicts, troubles, or afflictions. It is by the struggles and sorrows of human life that people and nations are made truly great; and therefore, we ought to be glad when we experience events that prevent our becoming slothful in ease. There is indeed rest for us; but it is only in God, through Jesus Christ.

But let us now consider also the vanity of all human glory (verses 14-17), as it was exemplified in Moab; it was turned to shame. “The strong staff” of Moab – “the beautiful rod” of which he had made his boast – was broken; and now the fugitives fled, for judgment fell upon all the cities of his land (verses 18-25). And why? Because of his pride, his loftiness, and his arrogance! (verses 26-30) Therefore, he was obliged to leave his cities, and take refuge in the rocks – becoming like a dove that builds its nest on the sides of a deep ravine. Pride is sure to fall, and arrogance will certainly be put down! God often seems to pa-

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *Jeremiah speaks against Moab for their pride and slothful security – verses 1-13*
- ❖ *He speaks against their carnal confidence and contempt of God – verses 14-47*

tiently endure such sins; but in the end, He will surely requite them. And then the proud boaster and his greatness will be laid low in the dust.

As the prophet beholds Moab being utterly destroyed, he weeps – even over these heathen people (verses 31-35). Not for the northern part of the country alone, but for “all Moab,” he cries out and mourns. Kir-heres was the stronghold of Moab (Isa. 16:11); it was doubtless famous for its vines, and it was near to Heshbon. About 15 miles from that place lay a body of water bearing the name of Jazer; there would be weeping there, but the weeping of the prophet would exceed it. “Thy plants are gone over the sea,” he says. The extensive cultivation of grapes in that district is set forth under the figure of a vine, whose tendrils stretch out on all sides; but now it would be at an end. This would also cause the joy, gladness, and shouting of those who tread the winepress to cease; and instead of those happy sounds, a wailing would be heard from Heshbon to Elealeh – towns which were built on hills two miles distant from each other. In fact, the sorrowful notes would reach even unto Jahaz, far to the southwest of Heshbon. Moab would suffer to such an extent that its idolatries would cease, and incense would be offered to its idols no longer (verse 35).

But the prophet laments over this nation’s downfall even further (verses 36-38). Isaiah had said, “My bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab” (Isa. 16:11); but Jeremiah says, “Mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes” – instruments which were used in funeral dirges, for Moab would become like a vessel in which there is no more pleasure. And from this destruction, there would be no escape! (verses 39-47) Jeremiah predicts that the enemy would rush down upon Kerioth like an eagle. The hearts of its heroes would tremble; and those who fled would fall into a pit or trap, from which no deliverance would come. And when were these prophecies against Moab fulfilled? King Nebuchadnezzar made war upon the Moabites around 581 BC, about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

As we study this chapter, we are surely struck with holy awe and reverence as we contemplate the Lord’s judgments in the earth. It would be a blessed and sanctified use of all afflictions and judgments that we behold or hear of among nations, families, or individuals, if – while we view the sorrows of others – we properly considered our own deservings also. When we see nations like Moab being convulsed and shaken to their very center because of the wickedness and impiety of the people, surely our own country has reason to humble herself before God. It will be a blessing to us if the threatenings of these sorrows upon Moab would lead our hearts in prayer to the Lord, asking that our minds may be deeply affected with the sense of national sins, and that His Holy Spirit would lead us all to call upon His name, and to serve Him with one consent!

Lord, we pray for our own nation, that we may be humbled for our transgressions against You, and sincerely repent thereof. Amen.

