

## Lecture Notes on Isaiah 15 & 16

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**Isaiah 15,16 The Oracle re Moab** Moab was a neighbor and a relative of Judah from a daughter of Lot, the nephew of Abraham (Genesis 19:36-38). They were not God's people, but they could have been if only they had humbled themselves under the throne of David.

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**15:1-9** lists locations known to the people of that day; not all are known to us. It is plain that the judgment of the Lord was throughout the entire nation. It was the Lord who brought this bloodshed on Moab.

**Who weeps over Moab?** This person, unidentified until the end of the oracle, has a heart that cries out (15:5), he weeps (16:9) and laments with his inmost being (16:11). The "I" is not Isaiah but the Lord speaking. The "I" of 15:9 and 16:10 can only be the Lord. With no indication of alternating speakers, it cannot be Isaiah. The oracle ends with Isaiah identifying the speaker as the Lord, "*This is the word the LORD has already spoken concerning Moab.*" So we know that the One speaking in v.5 is also the Lord. It is his heart that cries out for the fugitives fleeing his judgment. This text shows us that God does not delight in the death of the wicked. It shows God's desire that his mercy be accepted by sinners, and it shows that he does not withhold judgment, though he grieves at the horror of sin's consequences. He offers mercy and refuge no sinner deserves. He also dispenses the penalty sinners merit.

**16:1-4 An overture of peace** A proposal was being entertained. Maybe this is what the Moabites were considering; maybe it is what God was telling them. The idea is that in Moab's terrible distress they might find refuge in Judah. By stating it in this oracle, Isaiah in the Lord's name was promoting it as a solution. Moabites should again send lambs as tribute, just as they did in the past as an act of submission to Judah (2 Kings 3:4). By Moab doing so, there was hope of refuge. Its women were already fleeing trying to get across the Arnon River (v.2), their northern boundary. God's word to Judah was one of mercy, "*Let the fugitives stay with you.*"

**16:4,5** The Lord gives the same hope for Moab as for his own people. That hope is that a throne in Zion (v.1) will be established in the House of David (v.5). Isaiah spoke of the Messiah to come. Clearly the gospel is not for the Jews only; here it is spreading to the Moabites. No man has ever sat on David's throne, including David, who was the ultimate in faithfulness, justice and righteousness, but a unique Man was predicted to come in the line of David. He will be born of a virgin (7:14) and though human, He would still be God with his people (Immanuel, 7:14); indeed He is the Mighty God (9:6). The government would rest securely on his shoulders, with peace increased. No marauding Assyrian army would be able to overcome a kingdom so stable that it lasts forever supported by the zeal of the Lord (9:7).

This Messianic hope was centered in Judah. Moab should flee there for safety, and there the great Lord would protect them. Moab's only hope would be to align itself with that throne. In days to come, aliens will unite with Judah (14:1). Sadly, because of Moab's rejection it was to be other aliens, not them. That was the only hope for Moab in Isaiah 15 & 16 and for any people any time. It was a gospel of preservation and refuge from the oppressor. In the days of Isaiah, salvation was of the Jews (John 4:22) through whom our Lord came (Romans 9:5).

The Moabites should humble themselves and be subject to the ruler in Jerusalem. It was time to send lambs again. The Word of the Lord through Isaiah sent this message of deliverance and salvation for its suffering refugees.

**16:6** To submit to the ruler in Jerusalem was against the overweening pride of Moab. They would rather face their troubles by themselves, and even death, than swallow their pride and go humbly to the House of David for relief and life. In this way they chose God's judgment and spurned his grace. He would continue their destruction, even though the same Lord who has wrath for sin is glad and quick to forgive the one who will repent and come to him.

**16:6-14** This is the destruction Moab chose by its rejection of the salvation offered and spoken by the mouth of the Lord. As God punishes, he grieves (vv.9,11). He declares, "*I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?*" (Ezekiel 33:11) That kind of word was spoken to Moab too.

It is not true that if grace is shown to the wicked that they will automatically learn righteousness (Isaiah 26:10). Just as with the Israelites, God in a new covenant will have to give new hearts, or no one would ever leave their sin and flee to Christ, even in the face of impending disaster. (See Deuteronomy 30:1-11 and Jeremiah 31:31-34.)

**16:9-11** God is shown as one lamenting. This does not mean that he has human emotions or passions. There are anthropomorphic statements in Scripture picturing God with hands and eyes. There are anthropopathic passages which picture God with human emotion. These are not literal, but do convey truth about the Lord. God is not moved by passions as we are. He has no moods or change; he is immutable. But this passage shows God as not heartless, but caring, grieved not only at their plight, but also at the terrible sin that enslaves them. Moab chose to be destroyed. Mercy was just to the west across the Dead Sea; the Lord Who lived in Jerusalem said to Moab through his prophet Isaiah, "Come." They stayed where they were and died. The gospel comes as an invitation to come. The "come" Jesus spoke in Matthew 11:28 and John 6:35 is found in Isaiah 55:1. It is illustrated in Isaiah 15 & 16 with Moab.

**16:12-14** However, Moab chose her idols. We would all do the same but for the saving grace of God. Within three years and not a day more, poor Moab would be gone. The survivors, who could have lived in Judah, would be very few and hard to find. The real God invited them into his refuge; they stayed with their idols. Pride is a terrible thing.