

### Judgment on Assyria, Philistia, and Moab

#### Isaiah 14:24-16:14

Isaiah 14:24-27 - *“The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, “Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed, so it shall stand: <sup>25</sup> that I will break the Assyrian in My land, and on My mountains tread him underfoot. Then his yoke shall be removed from them, and his burden removed from their shoulders. <sup>26</sup> This is the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. <sup>27</sup> For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?”*

#### Background Notes

In Isaiah 13 we began our studies on a subdivision of the book that runs from chapters 13- 23. In this subdivision of eleven chapters, God’s judgment was pronounced on the nations surrounding Judah.

Chapter 13 and the first half of chapter 14 foretold God’s denunciation of Babylon, and God’s judgment on Assyria and Philistia was foretold in the second half of chapter 14.

#### Doctrinal Points

##### 1. The Lord pronounced judgment on Assyria.

God had determined Assyria’s destruction because of its cruel and ungodly ways, and nothing could thwart God’s plan (v24-27). In Isaiah 10 we discussed how God would use Assyria as His tool to discipline His people Israel – but cruel Assyria’s time for judgment would surely come.

Isaiah covered the historical fulfillment of this prophecy in chapter 37. When the Assyrian forces, under Sennacherib, had massed for battle on the mountains surrounding Jerusalem, the Lord Himself wiped out their army in a miraculous way.

We believe there is also an eschatological aspect to the Isaiah 14 prophecy of judgment upon Assyria. The End-Time “king of the north,” who is called “the Assyrian” in Micah 5:5, will come out of the ancient region of Assyria. When this future “king of the north” invades Israel, the Lord Himself will cut him down.

The Lord pronounced judgment against Assyria.

## **2. The Lord pronounced judgment against Philistia.**

Isaiah 14:28-32 - *"This is the burden which came in the year that King Ahaz died. <sup>29</sup> "Do not rejoice, all you of Philistia, because the rod that struck you is broken. For out of the serpent's roots will come forth a viper, and its offspring will be a fiery flying serpent. <sup>30</sup> The firstborn of the poor will feed, and the needy will lie down in safety; I will kill your roots with famine, and it will slay your remnant. <sup>31</sup> Wail, O gate! Cry, O city! All you of Philistia are dissolved, for smoke will come from the north, and no one will be alone in his appointed times." <sup>32</sup> What will they answer the messengers of the nation? That the Lord has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall take refuge in it.*

Philistia was located southwest of Judah along the Mediterranean Sea, in the area where Gaza is located today. In Isaiah's time, Philistia was rejoicing because a foreign power that had attacked them (probably Assyria) was suffering a setback. Isaiah warned them that their enemy's setback was only temporary, and that the worst was yet to come. As a viper attacks its prey (v29), Assyria invaded Philistia in 712 BC and 701 BC. Only the very poor and needy survived the invasion (v30).

In verse 32 the Lord warned His people not to make alliances with Philistia, but to trust in Him, because Philistia was doomed. Sure enough - when Sennacherib and the Assyrians invaded the Land in 712 BC, God's people were miraculously delivered (Isaiah 37) - but Philistia was defeated.

The Lord pronounced judgment against Philistia.

## **3. The Lord pronounced judgment against Moab.**

Isaiah 15 - *"The burden against Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste and destroyed, because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste and destroyed. <sup>2</sup> He has gone up to the temple and Dibon, to the high places to weep. Moab will wail over Nebo and over Medeba; on all their heads will be baldness, and every beard cut off. <sup>3</sup> In their streets they will clothe themselves with sackcloth; on the tops of their houses and in their streets everyone will wail, weeping bitterly. <sup>4</sup> Heshbon and Elealeh will cry out. Their voice shall be heard as far as Jahaz. Therefore the armed soldiers of Moab will cry out; his life will be burdensome to him. <sup>5</sup> "My heart will cry out for Moab; his fugitives shall flee to Zoar like a three-year-old heifer. For by the Ascent of Luhith they will go up with weeping; for in the way of Horonaim they will raise up a cry of destruction, <sup>6</sup> for the waters of Nimrim will be desolate, for the green grass has withered away. The grass fails; there is nothing green. <sup>7</sup> Therefore the abundance they have gained, and what they have laid up, they will carry away to the Brook of the Willows. <sup>8</sup> For the cry has gone all around the borders of Moab, its wailing to Eglaim, and its wailing to Beer Elim. <sup>9</sup> For the waters of Dimon will be full of blood; because I will bring more upon Dimon, and lions upon him who escapes from Moab, and on the remnant of the land."*

The nation of Moab was located east of Judah on the southeast half of the Dead Sea. All the cities mentioned in Isaiah 15 were cities of ancient Moab, and some of them are known even today. Mount Nebo is a popular tourist site, and the Medeba Map, a well-known mosaic map of ancient Jerusalem (dating to the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD), is on view today in the city of Medeba, Jordan.

The Isaiah 15-16 prediction of the attack and defeat of Moab was fulfilled by the invasion of the Assyrians, under either King Sargon or King Sennacherib. Isaiah predicted that the defeat would be so devastating that everyone would weep and wail (v3). In intense mourning, men would shave their heads and cut off their beards (v2). The roads in town would be filled with fleeing fugitives (v5). The water supply would be cut off, and the land would become desolate (v6). There would be great bloodshed, and the wealth of Moab would be looted (v7-8). The Assyrians would attack as relentlessly and violently as a lion attacks its helpless prey (v9).

The judgment against Moab continued in chapter 16.

Isaiah 16:1-5 - *“Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, from Sela to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion. <sup>2</sup> For it shall be as a wandering bird thrown out of the nest; so shall be the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon. <sup>3</sup> “Take counsel. Execute judgment. Make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day. Hide the outcast. Do not betray him who escapes. <sup>4</sup> Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler; for the extortioner is at an end, devastation ceases, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. <sup>5</sup> In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.”*

The fugitives from Moab escaped south to Petra (Sela) in the mountains of Edom (v1). From there they sent a lamb to Jerusalem as a peace token, requesting shelter and security from the Assyrian destroyer (v4). So Judah was exhorted to show mercy to the Moabite refugees, and to provide a hiding place – a refuge that would be like welcome shade at high noon (v3). Judah was not to oppress these poor refugees (v4).

Providing safety and security for refugees today (even though they may be from an enemy land) would be a good application for God's people to follow today.

Verse 5 looks to the future and the coming of the Messiah. When His throne is established on this earth, everyone will find safety and security, because He will faithfully judge with justice and righteousness as well as with loving kindness.

God's pronouncement of judgment on Moab continued in verses 6-16.

Isaiah 16:6-13 - *“We have heard of the pride of Moab - He is very proud of his haughtiness and his pride and his wrath; but his lies shall not be so. <sup>7</sup> Therefore Moab shall wail for Moab; everyone shall wail. For the foundations of Kir Hareseth you shall mourn; surely they are stricken. <sup>8</sup> For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah; the lords of the*

*nations have broken down its choice plants, which have reached to Jazer and wandered through the wilderness. Her branches are stretched out; they are gone over the sea. <sup>9</sup> Therefore I will bewail the vine of Sibmah, with the weeping of Jazer; I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh, for battle cries have fallen over your summer fruits and your harvest.*

*<sup>10</sup> Gladness is taken away, and joy from the plentiful field; in the vineyards there will be no singing, nor will there be shouting. No treaders will tread out wine in the presses; I have made their shouting cease.*

*<sup>11</sup> Therefore my heart shall resound like a harp for Moab, and my inner being for Kir Heres. <sup>12</sup> And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he will come to his sanctuary to pray; but he will not prevail.*

*<sup>13</sup> This is the word that the Lord has spoken concerning Moab since that time. <sup>14</sup> But now the Lord has spoken, saying, "Within three years, as the years of a hired man, the glory of Moab will be despised with all that great multitude, and the remnant will be very small and feeble."*

The point of this last verse about the hired man is obvious. How does a hired man keep track of his work hours? He counts his time exactly! He doesn't work a minute longer than what he's paid for. In the same way, **God's prophetic timetable is exact**. God's promises will be fulfilled right on **His perfect schedule** - not only the defeat of Moab within the three years predicted here in Isaiah's prophecy, but all the biblical prophecies that were yet to be predicted in the future. All the prophecies of the Bible **will be fulfilled - right on God's precise time schedule!**

Why would God judge Moab? Why would He allow Moab's fields to wither (v8), and why would He take away her joy of harvest (v9-10)? Why would He bring her religious activity to futility (v12)? God judged Moab because of her pride (v6). God hates pride, and God hates hypocrisy - then and today!

The Lord pronounced judgment against Moab.

## Practical Application

### Don't think that God is happy about judgment

When we read about so much judgment in these prophetic passages, we might come away with the idea that God likes to judge people. **No!** God is **not** happy about judgment! In Isaiah 15:5 God said, "My heart will cry out for Moab." And Isaiah 16:9 - "There I will bewail the vine of Sibmah; with the weeping of Jazer I will drench you with my tears." And Isaiah 16:11 - "Therefore my heart shall resound like a harp for Moab, and my inner being for Kir Heres."

So it's clear from these verses (and from many other verses throughout the Bible) that God is **not** happy about judgment. He is not willing for anyone to perish - He wants everyone to repent and come to Him. God is holy and righteous, so He **must** judge evil and sin - but He's not happy about it.

Don't think that God is happy about judgment.