

—{1}. **Isaiah 16:** **Moab's Judgement**

A. Introduction

1. We have remarked recently, and Carlos picked it up a week ago, that about **a** of the world's population are classified as belonging to the Christian faith
 - a. yet, of this number, we know that many of these are but professors and relatively few, a remnant, are possessors
 - b. this is true in respect at a macro level to what are called
 - (A) Christian countries
 - (1) which long ago have abandoned any pretense of administering the country in accordance with the justice and moral truth of God
 - (2) while, on the other hand, it is in atheistic and antagonistic countries that the church is strongest
 - (B) so also in Christian denominations and faith groups
 - (1) where some are faithful to God's word
 - (2) while others have long ago forsook the Scriptures to follow the commandments and doctrines of men
 - c. but it is true also at a micro level, in local bible-believing congregations, assemblies of believers for worship
 - (A) there are the sheep, and the goats
 - (B) the sheep who know the Shepherd's voice and follow
 - (C) the goats who look the same, do not follow Christ
 - d. Jesus Christ described this situation in His visible church, this aspect of the kingdom of God in a parable: likening the church to a field in which there was good seed sown, but in which the enemy had sown bad seed, and so it grew up with both the true grain and the false weeds, to be divided one from the other when the judgement comes
 - e. the false weeds are pretenders to the truth; that is the term I am going to use to refer to them this morning: pretenders
 - f. the country of Moab provides us with an illustration of these pretenders, an analogy to teach and to warn us

2. « Let us read this 16th chapter of Isaiah about the country Moab »

- a. the chapter continues Isaiah's message of warning to Moab that begins with chapter 15, which we considered a few weeks ago in our adult Bible class
- b. at the risk of wearying those who were there, I will repeat some of the history of the people of Moab
- c. and, as we go along, I want to draw out the analogy that exists between Moab and pretenders

B. Moab's History

1. the people of Moab were descended from Lot

- a. Lot was Abraham's nephew, and Isaac's cousin
- b. as Abraham journeyed to Canaan, he took Lot with him
- c. Lot shared in Abraham's blessings and the point was reached where they had too many sheep to live together
- d. Lot was given a choice by Abraham and he chose to live in the well-watered land south-east of the Dead Sea, near the cities of the plain, Sodom, Gomorrah, and others
- e. gradually Lot drifted into and lived in Sodom, and when they were destroyed, he and his two daughters escaped, while all the rest of his household perished
- f. by these two daughters, at their devising, he had two sons
 - (A) one called Ben-ammi, the ancestor of the Ammonites
 - (B) the other Moab, the ancestor of the people of Moab, this Moab being the second cousin of Isaac, and once removed of Jacob or Israel – they were close kin
- g. despite what we see at first glance, the people of Moab had then a tremendous spiritual heritage
 - (A) indeed, Peter, in his second letter (2:7) calls Lot a just or righteous who was oppressed by the sin around him
 - (B) Lot had spent many years under the personal care and example of that great man of faith, Abraham
 - (C) he had shared with Abraham in the blessings of God
- h. many pretenders have a great spiritual heritage
 - (A) they may belong to a church that can trace the line of its leadership right back to the apostles

- (B) they may be part of a communion which is descended from the great reformers: Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Menno Simons, Knox, Wesley
- (C) they may be members of a great Bible-believing assembly, with godly pastors as their leaders, and having sent countless missionaries to foreign fields
- (D) they may have parents, grand-parents, and so on back for generations who were people who walked with God

2. Moab saw the mighty hand of God at work

- a. God gave to Moab the land east of the Dead Sea, from the Arnon river on the north, to the border of Edom on the south and God instructed Moses that they were not to take this land away from Moab
- b. Moab, like the Amorite countries around, saw all that God had done in miraculously delivering Israel out of Egypt
- c. yet, rather than gratitude to God for blessing their cousin Israel, Moab called a hireling prophet to curse Israel; a prophet who despite the promises of wealth could only declare the truth of the LORD and bless Israel
- d. then they saw how God, despite Moab's resistance, was able to bring Israel into Canaan, casting out the Amorites – defeating Sihon and Og
- e. yet, Moab rejected the true God, Israel's God, and clung to a god of their own making, a cruel god, like the gods of the Canaanites, who demanded abhorrent worship
- f. many pretenders have seen God's hand at work
 - (A) they have heard the message of the true God
 - (B) they have seen God's kingdom expand through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - (C) they have witnessed the transformation in men and women through the new birth by the Holy Spirit

3. There were long years when Moab and Israel lived side by side

- a. Moab was a fertile land
- b. on account of its mountains and position, rain clouds coming from the west would drop their rain on Moab
- c. in the time of the judges, there was a famine in Israel, but there was food in Moab, and one man went with his wife and two sons to live there

- (A) while there the two sons married local girls, and then died without leaving any children; then the man died
 - (B) and Naomi decided to return home to Bethlehem
 - (C) at first her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, protested that they would go with her
 - (D) Ruth had seen the true LORD God of Israel in the life of her mother-in-law, Naomi, and stayed true
 - (E) Orpah is a type of a false weed 'Christian' for despite her protests and her knowledge, returned to her people and to her Gods
- d. many pretenders have a strong relationship with the true people of God
- (A) parents, brothers and sisters, cousins, wife, husband
 - (B) friends with witnessing believers
 - (C) attending church, participating in communion, despite the warning given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11
 - (D) impossible to tell apart from a true believer

C. Now we come to this passage in Isaiah 16

1. Assyria was the problem of the times

- a. all around, great and small, countries were being oppressed by this empire building, cruel nation
- b. Isaiah 15 is a prophecy of the punishment which is about to come to the land of Moab through Assyria
- c. this 16th chapter is a message of judgement and salvation, a combination repeated throughout Isaiah – the gospel message has been the same from Genesis to this present date: that of the sinfulness of man, the graciousness of God
- d. let's pick out some parts – not necessarily in verse order – of this message to Moab, and to pretenders

2. Verse 6: Pride, the hindrance to Moab's salvation – *We have heard of the pride of Moab, an excessive pride; Even of his arrogance, pride, and fury; His idle boasts are false.*

- a. in the Hebrew, one word stem for pride is repeated 4 times; it is found in its short, middle and long forms, it is found in its male and female forms; it is found in every form
- b. and then, in case the message is still not clear, two more words expressing pride are used, one meaning overflowing fury or arrogance, the other boasting

- c. Moab pride was total; and pride hindered their salvation
 - d. pride hinders the salvation of the pretender: the Pharisees would not admit to John's prophetic office for that would have meant losing face before people
 - e. nothing keeps the pretender more from God, forcing them into hypocrisy, than pride in religion; religious pride – I have lived a good life, I keep the 10 commandments, I live by the golden rule – I, I, I – keeps a person from Christ
3. Verses 7 to 11: Concern for things hinder Moab's salvation
- a. we will not read these verses again, but the crying theme of chapter 15 is repeated here: consider why they wail:
 - b. ⁷ Therefore Moab will wail; everyone of Moab will wail. You will moan for the raisin cakes [or, foundations] of Kir-hareseth As those who are utterly stricken. ⁸ For the fields of Heshbon have withered, the vines of Sibmah as well; The lords of the nations have trampled down its choice clusters Which reached as far as Jazer *and* wandered to the deserts; Its tendrils spread themselves out *and* passed over the sea. ⁹ Therefore I will weep bitterly for Jazer, for the vine of Sibmah; I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh; For the shouting over your summer fruits and your harvest has fallen away. ¹⁰ Gladness and joy are taken away from the fruitful field; In the vineyards also there will be no cries of joy or jubilant shouting, No treader treads out wine in the presses, For I have made the shouting to cease.
 - c. God destroys the things that stand between Him and Moab and their weeping is for the punishment, not for wrong
 - d. pretenders fail when they face hardship, when things are taken: they are those described in Jesus' parable of the soils – 'The *seed* which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to maturity.' (Luke 8:14)
4. Verses 2–4: Moab has no answer of their own to their dilemma
- a. ² Then, like fleeing birds *or* scattered nestlings, The daughters of Moab will be at the fords of the Arnon. ³ 'Give *us* advice, make a decision; Cast your shadow like night at high noon; Hide the outcasts, do not betray the fugitive. ⁴ Let the outcasts of Moab stay with you; Be a hiding place to them from the

destroyer. For the extortioner has come to an end, destruction has ceased, Oppressors have completely *disappeared from the land.*'

- (A) they are like birds, thrown from the nest, running in every direction, not knowing what to do (2)
- (B) they come to the border of their land: enter or leave?
- (C) give us advice; give us counsel; give us shelter (3)
- (D) they look and they see that Assyria has left Judah and spared the land; cannot you help us now? (4)

b. the pretenders have seen that God works in the church

- (A) though they are on the outside they are ready to take every advantage of its blessing
- (B) they come for counsel; they come for help
- (C) the church cries for them, weeps with them in their loss and their hardship, just as Isaiah does for Moab (9)

5. Verses 1 & 5: There is yet opportunity for Moab

- a. ¹ Send the *tribute* lamb to the ruler of the land, From Sela by way of the wilderness to the mountain of the daughter of Zion. ... ⁵ A throne will even be established in lovingkindness, And a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David; Moreover, he will seek justice And be prompt in righteousness.
- b. the opportunity is found in surrender to the throne of David, to coming to the dwelling place of the God of Israel
- c. surrender to the ruler of Judah, to the LORD God as represented by its king, by its Messiah, Anointed one
- d. there you will find justice of love, faithfulness or truth
- e. the passage goes back, of course, to the promised ruler of Judah of Isaiah 9:6-7 – ⁶ For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. – that is the only hope for Moab
- f. this is the only hope for the pretender – to leave his or her pretense of the Christian faith, and to turn in repentance for sin and faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, for outside of Him there is not salvation

D. Conclusion

1. but what of those of Moab who refuse to surrender to Messiah
 - a. what of the Orpah's who go back to their own prideful way of worship – even if they use the right words but out of a prideful and rebellious heart?
 - b. Verse 11 describes the fruitlessness of their religion: *So it will come about when Moab presents himself, When he wearies himself upon [his] high place And comes to his sanctuary to pray, That he will not prevail.*
 - c. for the pretender, all the religion in the world apart from saving faith in Jesus Christ is vain and fruitless
2. for such as refuse to submit, a time has been set
 - a. verse 14: 3 years, counted like a hired man under contract counts his years; not a day more – and destruction comes
 - b. for the pretender – ever hearing, never obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ – the day of judgement is set and is coming surely and certainly
 - c. with Isaiah let us weep for these in prayer that they turn from their prideful way to find God's gracious salvation, that they may come out of their bondage unto Christ.
 - d. one last word – this is not a message for other people, for the person next to you ... there seems to be a Moabite in each of us! If we are going to experience revival in our lives and in our churches, then its time that we took these warnings to the Moabites and applied them to ourselves. We have the opportunity to do this as we sing our closing hymn, 'Jesus, I Come.'

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