

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 16

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 16

Theme: "Will Unbelievers Help God's People?"

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 16:4 (KJV) *"Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land."*

INTRODUCTION

The Moabites are still the focus of Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 16. Isaiah begins with an appeal to Moab to help God's people who are cast out of their homeland. Will Moab help them and protect them? Sometimes God gives the privilege to unbelievers to show grace and mercy to God's people in order that they might receive God's grace and mercy in their lives. This is the teaching found in this chapter of Isaiah.

The Moabites were not strangers to Israel. They knew of their ties to Israel through Lot their founding father. Lot was the nephew of Abraham who took care of Abraham when God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees to enter

into the Promised Land. The Land of Promise was still owned and occupied by many fierce and wicked nations of Canaan. It was a dangerous place to be in. However, the LORD kept Lot and Abraham safe. These lessons on faith helped them both to grow in the LORD. However, Lot broke away from Abraham's godly influence and lived in Sodom which resulted in his and his family's demise. Out of an incestuous relationship, Lot's elder daughter gave birth to a son whom she named Moab which means "Who is my father?"

When Israel crossed the wilderness enroute to the Promised Land, God expressly commanded Israel not to distress the Moabites for the LORD would not give their land to Israel because of Moab's relationship with Israel (see Deuteronomy 2:9). Many years had come and gone and Moab and Israel had not seen eye to eye on many issues. They had been warring against each other rather than helping one another for the past hundreds of years. Now both nations were in dire straits. Israel, the northern kingdom was about to be destroyed, and Judah would soon follow suit. Moab was also in the pathway of the marauding armies of the Babylonians led by Nebuchadnezzar. The LORD gave Moab a reprieve by asking her through Isaiah to help God's people in their time of need.

Sometimes in life, God sends the opportunity to help through unbelievers. However, unbelievers may or may not help. If they do, God would bless them because they had blessed God's people in their time of

need. It was in such a time as this that Isaiah was sent to speak with the Moabites.

OUTLINE

1. Will Moab help God's people? (vv.1-5);
2. Moab is warned (vv. 6-8);
3. Crying for Moab (vv. 9-11);
4. Moab is condemned (vv. 12-14).

COMMENTARY

Will Moab Help God's People?

God's people are special in the eyes of God because He has a purpose and plan for their lives. He has faith in them even though at times they fail Him. The LORD has to chastise Israel for her sins like all other nations that sin against God.

Isaiah began his prophecy by commanding Moab to continue sending the tribute in the form of lamb to the ruler of Judah. Sela, "the Rock" was the capital city of Moab which is known as Petra today. The tribute was to be sent from Sela to the wilderness. They were still subjects of the ruler of Judah. They were commanded to send their tribute to the mount of the daughter of Zion, the Jews in Judah, the Southern kingdom. The Moabites would soon become like wandering birds cast out of the nest. This is a picture of homelessness. The Moabites will be without home and refuge. They will be wandering like lost birds not knowing where to fly as they roam aimlessly. This will occur at the

fords of Arnon. The river Arnon was north of Moab and this was the northern most boundary of Moab to the two and one half tribes of Israel and the nation of Ammon. The fall and exile of Moab was predicted here by Isaiah.

Four imperatives are used in verse 3 to drive home the urgency of this prophetic command to the Moabites. They were to: 1) Take counsel – listen and obey the Word of God. 2) Execute judgement – to do what is right in the eyes of God. 3) make their shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday, during which there is no shadow. However, the Moabites were commanded by the LORD God of Judah to make shadows in order to provide darkness to hide God's people. To do it in the noonday meant to protect another at their own risk. 4) Lastly, they were told not to *bewray* – not to uncover the nakedness in order to shame those who wander like the Jews. Moab was commanded by God to help and protect God's people. Take the Jews into your cities and homes and provide them refuge. Moab was told to be a covert hiding place to the Jews to protect them from the spoiler – the one who spoils.

The reason is that those who oppressed God's people would soon come to their end. They are called by God the extortioner, spoiler and oppressors. Their end is described as being consumed out of the land. They would be driven out. In other words the oppression of the Jews is not permanent, but temporary. However,

the punishment of the oppressors of God's people would be permanent. With this prophetic truth expressed to the Moabites, Moab is told to protect and help God's people when they escape. The throne of Judah would be restored in mercy. The King will return and sit on the throne of David – the Davidic dynasty will resume. The King will judge and seek judgment and bring about righteousness quickly. This refers to none other than Jesus Christ! This is not an earthly kingdom that will be restored as in the Old Testament where kings lived and died. This King will come and this prophecy will be fulfilled only in the millennium. This revelation was a very strong motivation for the Moabites to help the Jews.

Moab is Warned

The focus shifted very quickly to the Moabites themselves. The pride of the Moabites was well known and Isaiah declared that he had heard of it. Moab was very proud. The pride of Moab is mentioned four times in verse 6 alone. The word "very" is used by Isaiah to emphasize this! The same word is used in all four instances and has the idea of swelling and increasing in size. Moab started off as a small and insignificant nation. Then she grew to become a nation of strength and to believe she was great and mighty. Men of pride often lie and there is no lie worse than lying to self. Moab lies, bragging of her own haughtiness. In other words Moab's inflated ego is not that great even though she thought otherwise! Isaiah warned her to stop lying to herself.

Moab will howl – wail loudly for herself. The Moabites will mourn

everyone for one another with nationwide sorrow. There would be none who would be spared from the calamity that would fall upon them! Her own strength and invincibility were man-made, not real. Her power and strength had been given by man and when these men were destroyed, the power they bestowed is too destroyed. The foundations of Kir-har'e-seth, a fortress of earthenware or pottery would be broken into pieces and the Moabites would mourn. The word for mourn here is the word for mutter. All of them mutter like lost children over the common knowledge of the destruction of their foundations, helpless to do anything about it. A similar scenario was the 9/11 disaster where there was common muttering of the destruction of the twin towers in New York! Surely Moab is stricken – broken and wounded. Moab would soon be devastated and destroyed. She cannot hold on to her own pride which is a delusion that would soon fade away.

The absolute devastation of Moab is described in verse 8. First on the list were the fields of Heshbon. These fields were purportedly famous for her fruitfulness due to the constant supply of water. Hence in Song of Solomon 7:4, King Solomon described his wife's eyes as the fishpools in Heshbon, (KJV) "Thy neck *is* as a tower of ivory; thine eyes *like* the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim: thy nose *is* as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus." With a plentiful supply of water it is no wonder that the fields of Heshbon would be lush and green,

and very fruitful. However, Isaiah prophesied that even the fields of Heshbon renowned for her everlasting greenery will languish, waxing feeble. How it will fade and languish is not described. Whether it be through drought or God's direct destruction does not matter. Heshbon's reputation as an everlasting fruitful ground is NOT everlasting!

The second devastation is that the vine of Sibmah would also languish. Apparently Sibmah was well known for vineyards. Vineyards require a good supply of water to flourish. A description of what is required to grow a vineyard: "Find a piece of land that is frost free that has well drained soil, and that isn't too fertile; grapes do not do well in soil that is well fertilized. You want to plant your vineyard on land that accommodates a climate that has a relatively dry humidity that is cool during the evening, but not wet. This is especially important during the ripening period that occurs from January through March. Grapes are extremely hardy and will do well in soil that is considered to be of inferior quality. For this reason, grapes are ideal for hard-to-sow and hard-to-grow-in areas. Plant your vineyard, and make sure you have access to a water supply, rather through a natural source such as a dam, creek and rain water or through an irrigation system. Having access to a water source will allow you to maximize the production of your grape yield, which in turn will allow you to make more wine and sell more grape products."

[http://www.ehow.com/how_4885582_grow-small-vineyard.html]

Once the water is gone, the vineyard of Sibmah would suffer the same fate as Heshbon. These two cities were geographically located quite close to one another and probably shared the same water source.

The third devastation is "the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof, they are come *even* unto Jazer, they wandered *through* the wilderness: her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea." The lords of the heathen would probably be the Babylonians who would come from the north to break down the "principal plants" – a figure for the leaders of the land of Moab. They were to be thoroughly destroyed by the heathens. They fled as far as Jazer, one of their uttermost cities. These leaders would wander through the wilderness. The word for wander means "to stray", like lost men roaming in the wilderness. This description is similar to how God described the Jews in verse 3, although the word used there is different from the word used here in verse 8. The word for wander in verse 3 has the idea of fleeing. The word used to describe the Moabites wandering is worse, for they were lost in the wilderness.

"The branches are stretched" refers to the common Moabites who were uprooted from their homes and land and dispersed. The dispersion included going over the sea, i.e. the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea was located to the extreme west of Moab. To cross the Dead Sea meant that they would be thrust into the Land of Promise! In other words, the prophecy reveals to

the Moabites that now when she can help the Jews she ought to, as one day she would be found in the Land of the Jews and might need help in return! This might not be the best motivation to ask someone to render help but this was the way that the Moabites understood it.

Crying for Moab

Isaiah will bewail with the weeping of Jazer, including the vine of Sibmah, and Heshbon even Elealeh, a city of close proximity with Heshbon. The word for bewail is a strong word for crying where not only loudness is emphasized but also the flowing of tears. Isaiah says that he will empathize with the Moabites when they are devastated. He identifies himself with them, understanding the lack of the shouting of the summer fruits as the devastation will cause this shouting to cease. The harvest of the Moabites is fallen, smitten by the enemies! It is all gone. Summer fruits and harvest were times of reward for hard labour but now, Moab's favourite season of the year is fallen – cast down or destroyed.

There is no joy from Isaiah's heart even in the demise and destruction of the Moabites. He could only weep and mourn for them and with them. Such identification is crucial for it balances the sense of justice in the believer's heart with his sense of compassion. There is no dancing to see Judah's enemies fall and destroyed. These words will comfort as well as warn the Moabites to examine herself before these devastations come. She can help God's people and

show compassion on them as they seek refuge.

The joy of Gentiles is usually in the abundance of material things like land, money and possessions. Isaiah reminded Moab that their gladness would be forcibly taken away and they would be helpless to prevent it. Their once plentiful field would be vacant and destitute. There would be no singing in the vineyards as there are no grapes in the vines. Nor shouts of joy and gladness often heard when harvesting grapes. Such times were accompanied by feasting and drinking and great rejoicing as the Moabites celebrated their harvest. Instead only silence would echo throughout the land. The treaders who would usually stomp on the grapes to extract the juice would have nothing to press. Isaiah declares that he has made their vintage shouting to cease – fail. It is the prophecy of impending judgement that God gave to Isaiah that causes the rejoicing to cease.

The inward parts of Isaiah shall growl inwardly like a harp for Moab and for Kir-ha'resh. This is likened to a funeral dirge that is played within Isaiah's soul as he weeps for Moab and her fortress of earthenware. The great nation will be gone forever. It will cease to exist as a nation. Today Moab is gone forever.

Moab is Condemned

In the future when it appears that Moab is tired of her worship of idols, she will turn to the sanctuary of the Moabites' chief god called Chemosh to pray. But Chemosh will not be able to help Moab. He is

powerless to turn things around for Moab. Moab goes to the high places to worship and ask for help to ward off the impending judgement that Isaiah had prophesied, but to no avail. He is an idol with eyes that cannot see, hands that cannot help and feet that cannot move.

This was what the LORD said about Moab through the prophet Isaiah. The final additional note was that this would happen within three years. The period of three years begins with the end of the destruction of Judah. Jeremiah 48 details the destruction of Moab after the destruction of Judah by the Babylonians. The glory of Moab shall be contemned i.e. lightly esteemed. Their large number of people would be reduced to an insignificant one, and they would be weak.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Help from unbelievers

It seems strange that God Almighty would use Gentiles to help God's people who are in trouble. However, this privilege and honour was given to the Moabites. God does not need to use them as He can very well take care of His own. The issue is not one of God's inability, but rather a privilege He gives to unbelievers to help.

Their help or act of mercy will be remembered, for God's people will stand at the end of the age when all other nations fall and disappear from this world! God's people are unique in the eyes of God because of His special plans for them. They are no different from everyone else when it

comes to total depravity before salvation. But once they are saved the LORD has plans for them to do His sovereign will, and that could include giving the privilege of unbelievers to help them for the glory of God.

The pride of unbelievers – in this case did not allow them to help God's people. Some might do so out of compassion but the majority will not help. They would probably spurn the privilege given to them. They do not see it as a privilege. They will probably consider how helping would benefit them before they decide. If it turns out that there is no benefit to self, help will probably not come especially if the help rendered might be to their detriment.

They will not do what is right but rather what is best for them according to their pride. The Moabites did not take advantage of what transpired here as prophesied by Isaiah, failing to help the Jews when they were severely attacked by the Babylonians.

The end of all nations is prophesied. There is no nation on earth that will survive except the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Though all present nations will have their might and power displayed for all to see for the moment, they will all fade away. There is nothing safe and secure that lasts in this world, not even the might of superpowers. There are no super powers on earth other than the power of God. He alone is super and not man.

All mankind must realise that their life of wealth and pleasures and continuous good business dealings on

this earth are not forever, just like the Moabites thought that their crops in certain places were forever. God can easily and readily bring all things to an end at any moment. Man’s economic system of wealthy individuals and corporations may seem eternal but they will all crumble into dust and be blown by the wind any day. This earth will be destroyed by God with everything in it.

Balance justice with compassion
– the servant of God must be firm on his defence on God’s perfect Word and condemn the enemies of Christ with fervent heat and zeal. However, this strong stance must be balanced with a heart that is tender and compassionate. He must protect his own soul by never delighting in the deaths of God’s enemies and the sentencing of Hell upon these evil men.

Isaiah wept sincerely from within his soul as he carried the message of impending doom to the Moabites. There was only deep sorrow in his inward man. This is the heart of a child of God and God Himself. AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 16:1-5;

TUESDAY: Isaiah 16:6-14;

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 16:1-14;

THURSDAY: Isaiah 16:1-14;

FRIDAY: Isaiah 16:1-14.

Discussion Questions

1. What standard will God use to punish His own people when they sin against Him? Will this standard be lower or higher compared to God’s punishment upon unbelievers?

2. Why did God allow unbelievers to help Him protect His own people when they were in trouble? Does this not reflect a God who is not all powerful? Please provide biblical support for your answer.

3. Why does God use unbelievers to punish His own people when they sin against Him? Are these heathen not more evil and worse than God's people? Please explain your answer.

4. Is it fair and just for God to use these heathen to punish God's people and then punish them using another group of heathen? This circular form of punishment goes on and on in our world? Please explain your answer.

5. What does it mean to you to know that the kingdom of Christ will reign for eternity? Does it have any impact on your present life? Please explain.

6. Of the three sins mentioned in the Bible – the lust of the eyes; the lust of the flesh; and the pride of life, which one do you think is the worst? Please explain your answer.

7. Have you experienced in your life unbelievers helping you out of a difficult situation?

8. What are the things on this earth and in your life's experiences that you would consider as having the appearance of eternity?

9. Do you think that the world's economic system will collapse? Will there come a point in time where everyone on earth will be poor and there are no rich people? Please explain.

10. Do you delight in the deaths of the attackers of God's Word and testimony of Christ? How about those who preach another gospel and lead thousands to Hell by their deception?

11. How would you feel if you are told suddenly that your money is worthless and that what you have at home *now* is all that you will have for yourself and your family? Please explain.

12. If you are told that Singapore will be destroyed and the many will become few and feeble, what would your reaction be? How will this prophecy affect your thinking and relationship with others, God's Word and service? Please give reasons for your answer.

13. What lessons can you learn from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?
