

CHAPTER 48

Moab is next set to the bar before Jeremiah the prophet, whom God has constituted judge over nations and kingdoms, from his mouth to receive its doom. Isaiah's predictions concerning Moab had had their accomplishment (we had the predictions Isaiah 15 and 16 and the like ~~301E~~ Amos 2:1), and they were fulfilled when the Assyrians, under Salmanassar, invaded and distressed Moab. But this is a prophecy of the desolations of Moab by the Chaldeans, which were accomplished under Nebuzaradan, about five years after he had destroyed Jerusalem. Here is,

I. The destruction foretold, that it should be great and general, should extend itself to all parts of the country (v. 1-6, 8, and again v. 21-25, 34), that spoilers should come upon them and force some to flee (v. 9), should carry many into captivity (v. 12, 46), that the enemy should come shortly (v. 16), come swiftly and surprise them (v. 40, 41), that he should make thorough work (v. 10) and lay the country quite waste, though it was very strong (v. 14, 15), that there should be no escaping (v. 42, 45), that this should force them to quit their idols (v. 13, 35) and put an end to all their joy (v. 33, 34), that their neighbours shall lament them (v. 17-19) and the prophet himself does (v. 31, 36, etc.).

II. The causes of this destruction assigned; it was sin that brought this ruin upon them, their pride, and security, and carnal confidence (v. 7, 11, 14, 29), and their contempt of and enmity to God and his people (v. 26, 27, 30).

III. A promise of the restoration of Moab (v. 47).

~~280E~~ JEREMIAH 48:1-13

THE JUDGMENT OF MOAB

We may observe in these verses,

I. The author of Moab's destruction; it is *the Lord of hosts*, that has armies, all armies, at his command, and *the God of Israel* (v. 1), who will

herein plead the cause of his Israel against a people that have always been vexatious to them, and will punish them now for the injuries done to Israel of old, though Israel was forbidden to meddle with them (⁴⁰⁰Deuteronomy 2:9), therefore the destruction of Moab is called *the work of the Lord* (v. 10), for it is he that pleads for Israel; and his work will exactly agree with his word, v. 8.

II. The instruments of it: *Spoilers shall come* (v. 8), shall come with a sword, a sword that shall *pursue them*, v. 2. “*I will send unto him wanderers*, such as come from afar, as if they were vagrants, or had missed their way, but they shall *cause him to wander*; they seem as wanderers themselves, but they shall make the Moabites to be really wanderers, some to flee and others to be carried into captivity.” These destroyers stir up themselves to do execution; they *have devised evil against Heshbon*, one of the principal cities of Moab, and they aim at no less than the ruin of the kingdom: *Come, and let us cut it off from being a nation* (v. 2); nothing less will serve the turn of the invaders; they come, not to plunder it, but to ruin it. The prophet, in God's name, engages them to make thorough work of it (v. 10): *Cursed be he that does the work of the Lord deceitfully*, this bloody work, this destroying work; though it goes against the grain with men of compassion, yet it is *the work of the Lord*, and must not be done by the halves. The Chaldeans have it in charge, by a secret instinct (says Mr. Gataker), to destroy the Moabites, and therefore they must not spare, must not, out of foolish pity, *keep back their sword from blood*; they would thereby bring a sword, and a curse with it, upon themselves, as Saul did by sparing the Amalekites and Ahab by letting Benhadad go. *Thy life shall go for his life*. To this work is applied that general rule given to all that are employed in any service for God, *Cursed by he that does the work of the Lord deceitfully* or negligently, that pretends to do it, but does it not to purpose, makes a show of serving God's glory, but is really serving his own ends and carries on the work of the Lord no further than will suit his own purposes, or that is slothful in business for God and takes neither care nor pains to do it as it should be done, ⁴⁰¹Malachi 1:14. Let not such deceive themselves, for God will not thus be mocked.

III. The woeful instances and effects of this destruction. The cities shall be laid in ruins; they shall be *spoiled* (v. 1) and cut down (v. 2); they shall be *desolate* (v. 9), *without any to dwell therein*; there shall be no houses to

dwell in, or no people to dwell in them, or no safety and ease to those that would dwell in them. *Every city shall be spoiled and no city shall escape.* The strongest city shall not be able to secure itself against the enemies' power, nor shall the finest city be able to recommend itself to the enemies' pity and favour. The *country* also shall be wasted, the *valley shall perish*, and the *plain be destroyed*, v. 8. The corn and the flocks, which used to cover the plains and make the valleys rejoice, shall all be destroyed, eaten up, trodden down, or carried off. The most sacred persons shall not escape: *The priests and princes shall go together into captivity.* Nay, Chemosh, the god they worship, who, they hope, will protect them, shall share with them in the ruin; his temples shall be laid in ashes and his image carried away with the rest of the spoil. Now the consequence of all this will be,

1. Great shame and confusion: *Kirjathaim is confounded*, and Misgah is so. They shall be ashamed of the mighty boasts they have sometimes made of their cities: *There shall be no more vaunting in Moab concerning Heshbon* (so it might be read, v. 2); they shall no more boast of the strength of that city when the evil which is designed against it is brought upon it. Nor shall they any more boast of their gods (v. 13); they *shall be ashamed of Chemosh* (ashamed of all the prayers they have made to and all the confidence they put in that dunghill deity), *as Israel was ashamed of Beth-el*, of the golden calf they had at Beth-el, which they confided in as their protector, but were deceived in, for it was not able to save them from the Assyrians; nor shall Chemosh be able to save the Moabites from the Chaldeans. Note, Those that will not be convinced and made ashamed of the folly of their idolatry by the word of God shall be convinced and made ashamed of it by the judgments of God, when they shall find by woeful experience the utter inability of the gods they have served to do them any service.

2. There will be great sorrow; there is a *voice of crying* heard (v. 3) and the cry is nothing but *spoiling and great destruction.* Alas! alas! *Moab is destroyed*, v. 4. The great ones having quitted the cities to shift for their own safety, even the *little ones have caused a cry to be heard*, the meaner sort of people, or the little children, the innocent harmless ones, whose cries at such a time are the most piteous. Go up to the hills, go down to the valleys, and you meet with *continual weeping (weeping with weeping)*; all are in tears; you meet none with dry eyes. Even the enemies have heard the cry, from whom it would have been policy to conceal it, for they will be

animated and encouraged by it; but it is so great that it cannot be hid, 3. There will be great hurry; they will cry to one another, “Away, away! *flee; save your lives* (v. 6); shift for your own safety with all imaginable speed, though you escape as bare and naked as the *heath*, or grig, or dry shrub, *in the wilderness*; think not of carrying away any thing you have, for it may cost you your life to attempt it, ^{<B16>}Matthew 24:16-18. Take shelter, though it be in a barren wilderness, that you may have your lives for a prey. The danger will come suddenly and swiftly; and therefore *give wings unto Moab* (v. 9); that would be the greatest kindness you could do them; that is what they will call for, *O that we had wings like a dove!* for unless they have wings, and can fly, there will be no escaping.”

IV. The sins for which God will now reckon with Moab, and which justify God in these severe proceedings against them.

1. It is because they have been secure, and have trusted in their wealth and strength, *in their works and in their treasures*, v. 7. They had taken a great deal of pains to fortify their cities and make large works about them, and to fill their exchequer and private coffers, so that they thought themselves in as good a posture for war as any people could be and that none durst invade them, and therefore set danger at defiance. They trusted *in the abundance of their riches and strengthened themselves in their wickedness*, ^{<B16>}Psalms 52:7. Now, for this reason, that they may have a sensible conviction of the vanity and folly of their carnal confidences, God will send an enemy that will master their works and rifle their treasures. Note, We forfeit the comfort of that creature which we repose that confidence in which should be reposed in God only. The reed will break that is leaned upon.

2. It is because they have not made a right improvement of the days of the peace and prosperity, v. 11.

(1.) They had been long undisturbed: *Moab has been at ease from his youth*. It was an ancient kingdom before Israel was, and had enjoyed great tranquillity, though a small country and surrounded with potent neighbours. God's Israel were afflicted from their youth (^{<B16>}Psalms 129:1, 2), but *Moab at ease from his youth*. He has *not been emptied from vessel to vessel*, has not known any troublesome weakening changes, but is as wine kept on the lees, and not racked or drawn off, by which it retains its strength and body. He has not been unsettled, nor any way made uneasy;

he has not *gone into captivity*, as Israel have often done, and yet Moab is a wicked idolatrous nation, and one of the confederates against *God's hidden ones*, ^{<383>}Psalm 83:3, 6. Note, There are many that persist in unrepented iniquity and yet enjoy uninterrupted prosperity.

(2.) They had been as long corrupt and unreformed: He *has settled on his lees*; he has been secure and sensual in his prosperity, has rested in it, and fetched all the strength and life of the soul from it, as the wine from the lees. *His taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed*; he is still the same, as bad as ever he was. Note, While bad people are as happy as they used to be in the world it is no marvel if they are bad as they used to be. They have no changes of their peace and prosperity, *therefore fear not God*, their hearts and lives are unchanged, ^{<359>}Psalm 55:19.

^{<248>}JEREMIAH 48:14-47

THE JUDGMENT OF MOAB

The destruction is here further prophesied of very largely and with a great copiousness and variety of expression, and very pathetically and in moving language, designed not only to awaken them by a national repentance and reformation to prevent the trouble, or by a personal repentance and reformation to prepare for it, but to affect us with the calamitous state of human life, which is liable to such lamentable occurrences, and with the power of God's anger and the terror of his judgments, when he comes forth to contend with a provoking people. In reading this long roll of threatenings, and meditating on the terror of them, it will be of more use to us to keep this in our eye, and to get our hearts thereby possessed with a holy awe of God and of his wrath, than to enquire critically into all the lively figures and metaphors here used.

I. It is a surprising destruction, and very sudden, that is here threatened. They were very secure, thought themselves *strong for war* and able to deal with the most powerful enemy (v. 14), and yet the calamity is near, and he is not able to keep it off, nor so much as to keep the enemy long in parley, for the *affliction hastens fast* (v. 16) and will soon come to a crisis. The enemy shall *fly as an eagle*, so swiftly, so strongly shall he come (v. 40), as an eagle flies upon his prey, and *he shall spread his wings*, the wings of his army, *over Moab*; he shall surround it, that none may escape. *The*

strong-holds of Moab are taken by *surprise* (v. 41), so that all their strength stood them in no stead; and this made *the hearts* even of *their mighty men to fail*, for they had not time to recollect the considerations that might have animated them. It requires a more than ordinary degree of courage not to be *afraid of sudden fear*.


II. It is an utter destruction, and such as lays Moab all in ruins: *Moab is spoiled* (v. 15), quite spoiled, is *confounded and broken down* (v. 20); their cities are laid in ashes, or seized by the enemy so that they are forced to quit them, v. 15. Divers cities are here named, upon which judgment has come, and the list concludes with an *et cetera* — *and such like*. What occasion was there for him to mention more particulars when it comes *upon all the cities of Moab* in general, *far and near*? v. 21-24. Note, When iniquity is universal we have reason to expect that calamity should be so too. The kingdom is deprived of its dignity and authority: *The horn of Moab is cut off*, the horn of its strength and power, both offensive and defensive; *his arm is broken*, that he can neither give a blow nor prevent a blow, v. 25. Is the youth of the kingdom the strength and beauty of it? *His chosen young men have gone down to the slaughter*, v. 15. They went down to the battle promising themselves that they should return victorious; but God told them that they went *down to the slaughter*; so sure are those to fall against whom God fights. In a word, *Moab shall be destroyed from being a people*, v. 42. Those that are enemies to God's people will soon be made no people.

III. It is a lamentable destruction; it will be just matter of mourning and will turn joy into heaviness.

1. The prophet that foretels it does himself lament it, and mourns at the very foresight of it, from a principle of compassion to his fellow-creatures and concern for human nature. The prophet will himself *howl for Moab*; his very *heart shall mourn for them* (v. 31); he will *weep for the vine of Sibmah* (v. 32); his *heart shall sound like pipes for Moab*, v. 36. Though the destruction of Moab would prove him a true prophet, yet he could not think of it without trouble. The ruin of sinners is no pleasure to God, and therefore should be a pain to us; even those that give warning of it should lay it to heart. These passages, and many others in this chapter, are much the same with what Isaiah had used in his prophecies against Moab (²³¹Isaiah 15:16); for, though there was a long distance of time between that prophecy and this, yet they were both dictated by one and the same

Spirit, and it becomes God's prophets to speak the language of those that went before them. It is no plagiarism sometimes to make use of old expressions, provided it be with new affections and applications.

2. The Moabites themselves shall lament it; it will be the greatest mortification and grief imaginable to them. Those that sat in *glory*, in the midst of wealth, and mirth, and all manner of pleasure, shall *sit in thirst*, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water, no comfort is, v. 18. It is time for them to *sit in thirst*, and inure themselves to hardship, when *the spoiler has come*, who will strip them of all, and empty them. The Moabites in the remote corners of the country, that are furthest from the danger, will be inquisitive to know how the matter goes, what news from the army, will ask every one *that escapes*, *What is done?* v. 19. And when they are told that all is gone, that the invader is the conqueror, they will *howl and cry*, in bitterness and anguish of spirit (v. 20); they will abandon themselves to solitude, to lament the desolations of their country; they will *leave the cities* that used to be full of mirth, *and dwell in the rock* where they may have their full of melancholy; they shall no more be singing birds, but mourning birds, *like the dove* (v. 28); *the doves of the valley*, ^{<31716>}Ezekiel 7:16. Let those that give themselves up to mirth know that God can soon change their note. Their sorrow shall be so very extreme that they shall make themselves *bald and cut* themselves (v. 37), which were expressions of a desperate grief, such as tempted men to be even their own destroyers. *Job* indeed *rent his mantle and shaved his head*, but he did not cut himself. When the flood of passion rises ever so high wisdom and grace must set bounds to it, set banks to it, to restrain it from such barbarities. The sorrow shall be universal (v. 38): *There shall be a general lamentation upon all the house-tops of Moab*, where they worshipped their idols, to whom they shall in vain bemoan themselves, *and in all the streets*, where they conversed with one another, for they shall be free in communicating their grief and fears and in propagating them; for they see all lost: *"I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure*, which shall not be regarded and cannot be pieced again." That which Moab used to rejoice in was their pleasant fruits and the abundance of their rich wines. The delights of sense were all the matter of their joy. Take away these, destroy their gardens and vineyards, and you make *all their mirth to cease*, ^{<3211>}Hosea 2:11, 12. There is great weeping when their plants are transplanted, *have gone over the sea* (v. 32), are carried into other countries, to be planted there. *The spoiler has fallen upon thy summer-*

fruits and upon thy vintage, and it is this that makes *the cry of Heshbon* to reach even to *Elealeh*, v. 34. *Take joy and gladness from the plentiful field, and you take it from the land of Moab*, v. 33. If *the wine fail from the wine-presses*, that used to be trodden with acclamations of joy, all their gladness is cut off. Take away that shouting, and there shall be no shouting. Note, Those who make the delights of sense their chief joy, their exceeding joy, since these are things they may easily be deprived of in a little time subject themselves to the tyranny of the greatest grief; whereas those who rejoice in God may do that even when *the fig-tree does not blossom and there is no fruit in the vine*. These Moabites lost not only their wine, but their water too: Even *the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate* (v. 34), and therefore their grief grew extravagantly loud and noisy, and their lamentations were heard in all places like the lowing of a *heifer of three years old*. The expressions here are borrowed from  Isaiah 15:5, 6.

3. All their neighbours are called to mourn with them, and to condole with them on their ruin (v. 17): *All you that are about him bemoan him*, Let him have that allay to his grief, let him see himself pitied by the adjoining countries. Nay, let those at a distance, who do but *know his name* and have heard of his reputation, take notice of his fall, and say, *How is the strong staff broken*, whose strength was the terror of its enemies, *and the beautiful rod*, whose beauty was the pride of its friends! Let the nations take notice of this and receive instruction. Let none be puffed up with or put confidence in their strength or beauty, for neither will be a security against the judgments of God.

IV. It is a shameful destruction and such as shall expose them to contempt: *Moab is made drunk* (v. 26), and he that is made drunk is made vile; he *shall wallow in his vomit*, and become an odious spectacle, *and shall justly be in derision*. Let the Moabites be intoxicated with the cup of God's wrath till they stagger and fall, and be brought to *their wits' end*, and make themselves ridiculous by the wildness not only of their passions but of their counsels. And again (v. 39): *Moab shall be a derision and a dismaying to all about him*; they shall laugh at the fall of the pomp and power he was so proud of. Note, Those that are haughty are preparing reproach and ignominy for themselves.

V. It is the destruction of that which is dear to them, not only of their summer fruits and their vintage, but of their wealth (v. 36): *The riches that*

he has gotten have perished, though he thought he had laid them up very safely, and promised himself a long enjoyment of them, yet they are gone. Note, The money that is hoarded in the chest is as liable to perishing as the summer-fruits that lie exposed in the open field. Riches are shedding things, and, like dust as they are, slip through our fingers even when we are in most care to hold them fast and gripe them hard. Yet this is not the worst; even those whose religion was false and foolish were fond of it above any thing, and, such as it was, would not part with it; and therefore, though it was really a promise, yet to them it was a threatening (v. 35), that *God will cause to cease him that offers in the high places*, for the high places shall be destroyed, and the fields of offerings shall be laid waste, and the priests themselves, *who burnt incense to their gods*, shall be slain or carried into captivity, v. 7. Note, It is only the true religion, and the worship and service of the true God, that will stand us in stead in a day of trouble.

VI. It is a just and righteous destruction, and that which they have deserved and brought upon themselves by sin.

1. The sin which they had been most notoriously guilty of, and for which God now reckoned with them, was pride. It is mentioned six times, v. 29. *We have all heard of the pride of Moab*; his neighbours took notice of it; it has testified to his face, as Israel's did; *he is exceedingly proud*, and grows worse and worse. Observe *his loftiness, his arrogancy, his pride, his haughtiness*; the multiplying of words to the same purport intimates in how many instances he discovered his pride, and how offensive it was both to God and man. It was charged upon them ²³⁶⁶ Isaiah 16:6, but here it is expressed more largely than there. Since then they had been under humbling providences, and yet were unhumbed; nay, they grew more arrogant and haughty, which plainly marked them for that utter destruction of which pride is the forerunner. Two instances are here given of the pride of Moab: —

(1.) He had conducted himself insolently towards God. He must be brought down with shame (v. 26), for *he has magnified himself against the Lord*; and again (v. 42), *he shall be destroyed from being a people*, for this very reason. The Moabites preferred Chemosh before Jehovah, and thought themselves a match for the God of Israel, whom they set at defiance.

(2.) He had conducted himself scornfully towards Israel, particularly in their late troubles; therefore Moab shall fall into the same troubles; into the same hands, and be a derision, for Israel was *a derision to him*, v. 26, 27. The generality of the Moabites, when they heard of the calamities and desolations of their neighbours the Jews, instead of lamenting them, rejoiced in them, they *skipped for joy*. Many, in such a case, entertain in their minds a secret pleasure at the fall of those they had a dislike to, who yet have so much discretion as to conceal it; it is so invidious a thing. But the Moabites industriously proclaimed their joy, and avowed the enmity they had to Israel, triumphing over every Israelite they met with in distress and laughing at him, which was as inhuman as it was impious and an impudent affront both to man, whose nature they were of, and to God, whose name they were called by. Note, Those that deride others in distress will justly and certainly, sooner or later, come into distress themselves, and be had in derision. Those that are *glad at calamities*, especially the calamities of God's church, *shall not long go unpunished*.

2. Besides this they had been guilty of malice against God's people, and treachery in their dealings with them, v. 30. They made a jest of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, and pretended, when they laughed at them, that it was but in sport and to make themselves merry; but, says God, "*I know his wrath*; I know it comes from the old enmity he has to the seed of Abraham and the worshippers of the true God. *I know* he thinks these calamities of the Jewish nation will end in their utter extirpation. He now tells the Chaldeans what bad people the Jews are, and irritates them against them; *but it shall not be so* as he expects; *his lies shall not so effect it*. The nation, whose fall they triumph in, shall recover itself." Some read it, *I know his rage*. *Is it not so?* Is he not very furious against the people of God? And *his lies I know* also. *Do they not do so?* Do they not belie them? Note, All the fury and all the falsehood of the church's enemies are perfectly known to God, whatever the pretenses are with which they think to cover them, ²³⁷⁸Isaiah 37:28.

VII. It is a complicated destruction, and by one instance after another will at length be completed; for those that make their escape from one judgment shall perish by another: *Fear, and the pit, and the snare, shall be upon them*, v. 43. There shall be fear to drive them into the pit, and a snare to hold them fast in it when they are in it; so that they shall neither escape from the destruction nor escape out of it. What was said of sinners in general (²³⁴⁷Isaiah 24:17, 18), that those who *flee from the fear shall fall*

into the pit and those who come up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare, is here particularly foretold concerning the sinners of Moab (v. 44); for it is *the year of their visitation*, when God comes to reckon with them, and will be known by the judgments which he executes, for he is *the King whose name is the Lord of hosts* (v. 15); he is not only *the King* who has authority to give judgment, but he is *the Lord of hosts*, who is able to do what he has determined. The figurative expressions used v. 44 are explained in one instance (v. 45): *Those that fled* out of the villages for fear of the enemy's forces put themselves *under the shadow of Heshbon*, stood there, and supposed they stood safely, as now armies sometimes retire under the cannon of a fortified city, and it is their protection; but here they should be disappointed, for, when *they flee out of the pit, they fall into the snare*; Heshbon, which they thought would shelter them, devours them as Moses had foretold long since (⁽⁴⁰²⁾Numbers 21:28): *A fire has gone out of Heshbon, and a flame from the city of Sihon*, and devours those that come from all *the corners of Moab*, and fastens upon *the crown of the head of the tumultuous noisy ones*, or of the revellers, or children of noise, not meant of the rude clamorous multitude, but of the great men, who bluster, and hector, and make a noise; the judgments of God shall light on them. Shall we hear the conclusion of this whole matter? We have it (v. 46): “*Woe be to thee, O Moab! thou art undone; the people that worship Chemosh perish, and are gone; farewell, Moab. Thy sons and daughters, the hopes of the next generation, have gone into captivity after the Jews, whose calamities they rejoiced in.*”

VIII. Yet it is not a perpetual destruction. The chapter concludes with a short promise of their return out of *captivity in the latter days*. God, who brings them into captivity, *will bring again their captivity*, v. 47. Thus tenderly does God deal with Moabites, much more with his own people! Even with Moabites he *will not contend for ever, nor be always wrath*. When Israel returned, Moab did; and perhaps the prophecy was intended chiefly for the encouragement of God's people to hope for that salvation which even Moabites shall share in. Yet it looks further, to gospel times; the Jews themselves refer it to the days of the Messiah; then the captivity of the Gentiles, under the yoke of sin and Satan, shall be brought back by divine grace, which shall *make them free, free indeed*. This prophecy concerning Moab is long, but here it ends; it ends comfortably: *Thus far is the judgment of Moab.*