

THE PEOPLE OF CHEMOSH

Jon Macon

The entire forty-eighth chapter of the book of Jeremiah is a prophecy against the nation of Moab. Moab was not only a near neighbor to Israel, but they were also kinsmen, as the Moabites were descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot (Gen 19:37-38). Although the father of the nation was a righteous man (2 Pet 2:7-8), it was literally born from wickedness. Unfortunately, these descendants of Lot chose to follow the paths of wickedness and would soon reap the judgment of God.

Moab's utter destruction

God foretold that the cities, valleys, and plains of Moab would be destroyed and spoiled. No city would escape (Jer 48:8,24), and no inhabitants would be left (Jer 48:9). The Moabite children would cry (Jer 48:4-5), and there would be lamentation on all the housetops and in the streets of Moab (Jer 48:38). Every head would be bald, "and every beard clipped: upon all the hands shall be cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth" (Jer 48:37). Fear, the pit, and the snare would come upon the Moab (Jer 48:43-44). Many people would be killed (Jer 48:10,15), while the remainder would be taken into captivity by the Babylonians (Jer 48:11-12,46-47). Among the captives would be the image of Chemosh and the idolatrous priests and princes (Jer 48:7). Finally, the fruit and waters of the land would be gone (Jer 48:32-34) and Moab would "*be destroyed from being a people*" (Jer 48:42). Later, their captivity of Moab would be returned (Jer 48:47), likely a reference to the New Testament conversion of those who had absorbed Moab, because she would never be a physical nation again.

Jeremiah 48 and modern archeology

Twenty-five Moabite places are mentioned in Jeremiah 48: Nebo (Jer 48:1,22), Kiriathaim (Jer 48:1,23), Misgab (Jer 48:1), Heshbon (Jer 48:2,34,45), Madmen (Jer 48:2), Horonaim (Jer 48:3,5,34), Luhith (Jer 48:5), Dibon (Jer 48:18,22), Aroer (Jer 48:19), Arnon (Jer 48:20), Holon (Jer 48:21), Jahazah (Jer 48:21,34), Mephaath (Jer 48:21), Beth-diblatha'im (Jer 48:22), Bethgamul (Jer 48:23), Bethmeon (Jer 48:23), Kerioth (Jer 48:24,40), Bozrah (Jer 48:24), Kirheres (Jer 48:31,36), Sibmah (Jer 48:32), Jazer (Jer 48:32), Elealeh (Jer 48:34), Zoar (Jer 48:34), Nimrim (Jer 48:34), and Sihon (Jer 48:45). The Moabite Stone, which was set up in Dibon in about 850 B.C. by king Mesha to commemorate Moab's independence from Israel (2 Kgs 3:5), was discovered in the year 1868. Interestingly, this monument contains a list of 17 place names, 12 of which are found in the Bible and many of them in Jeremiah 48.

The people of Chemosh

Chemosh was the national "god" of the Moabites (and shared by the Amorites according to Judges 11:24). God called Moab "*the people of Chemosh*" (Num 21:29; Jer 48:46), and He called Chemosh "*the abomination of Moab*" (1 Kgs 11:7; 2 Kgs 23:13). The name "Chemosh" means "*subduer*," and the Moabites credited him for their victories. King Mesha mentioned Chemosh 12 times on his Moabite Stone. The king claimed to be the son of Chemosh, and built the high place on which the stone was placed for Chemosh. Mesha claimed that Chemosh delivered him and his people from Israel (2 Kgs 3:5), who had ruled over them

THE PEOPLE OF CHEMOSH

(continued)

since king David (2 Sam 8:1-2; 2 Kgs 3:4). Later, Jehoram king of Israel joined with Jehoshaphat king of Judah and the king of Edom in defeating Mesha and the Moabites (2 Kgs 3:6-26). After this, Mesha sacrificed his own son and royal heir to appease Chemosh (2 Kgs 3:27). Solomon had introduced the worship of Chemosh into Israel (1 Kgs 11:7,33). Later, righteous king Josiah obeyed God's law (Deut 12:29-31; 18:10) and eradicated idolatry (including Chemosh, 2 Kgs 23:13) and its associated wickedness from Israel (2 Kgs 23:1-20). But the Moabites continued to serve Chemosh, the "subduer" unto the time of Jeremiah the prophet. But God was going to make Moab ashamed of Chemosh just as He had made Israel ashamed of their golden calf in Bethel (Jer 48:13). The "people of Chemosh" were going to perish and be sent into captivity (Jer 48:46). This shame would be compounded by Chemosh, the so-called "subduer," being subdued by Jehovah and his image, priests and princes taken into captivity with his followers (Jer 48:7). The falsehood, foolishness, and vanity of worshipping this idol would be made manifest to all mankind.

Pride, wrath, and lies

In addition to her idolatry, Moab had several other faults for which she would partake of the wrath of the Almighty. Moab was known for pride, wrath, and lies. *"We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart. I know his wrath, saith the Lord; but it shall not be so; his lies shall not so effect it"* (Jer 48:29-30). God resists the proud (Jas 4:6), and they will not go unpunished (Prov 16:5). Those who rejoice against their enemies will also not go unpunished by God (Prov 17:5). This was another problem that the Moabites had. Moab had "magnified himself against the Lord" (Jer 48:26) and derided Israel and skipped for joy when he was found among thieves (Jer 48:27). Because Israel was a derision to Moab and Israel's calamity a source of joy to her, God was going to make Moab to "be in derision" (Jer 48:2). God warns us not to rejoice in someone else's calamity (2 Sam 4:10; Job 31:29-30; Prov 24:17-18; Obad 11-16; Gal 6:7).

God is not mocked

God had appointed Moab to destruction for her wickedness, and the Babylonians were God's chosen weapons of war (Jer 51:20-23), His appointed sword (Jer 47:2,6-7). God even placed a curse upon any of the Babylonians who were deceitful or negligent in doing "the work of the Lord" in destroying Moab (Jer 48:10). In Jeremiah 48:43-44, the Lord said, *"Fear, and the pit, and the snare, shall be upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the Lord. He that flees from the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that gets up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for I will bring upon it, even upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the Lord."* What happened to Moab is yet another reminder to us all that "God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal 6:7), and, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet 2:9).