

When You Want Blessing but not the God of Blessing – Isaiah 14:24 – 16:14

Introduction – How would a nation respond to the offer in the midst of a terrible crisis and an impending threat that could not be stopped, that all would be taken care of and relieved, and all the nation had to do was come, as a nation, and bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ? And would the church be willing to preach such a message?

Assyria and God's Unstoppable Purposes (14:24-27) – God is in control of the rise and fall of all nations according to His own purposes and Assyria, the strongest empire at that time, is simply an example to all the nations in all times, including Judah, of this truth. Assyria would be crushed in the Lord's own land while the people witnessed (vv24-25, Isaiah 37). *"This is the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth...over all the nations"* (vv26-27). All nations in all times are to take notice. A nation that is thriving while refusing to bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ will be tempted to think it just doesn't matter. Kings are to learn wisdom from this and other stories (Psalm 2:10-12).

Philistia and the Serpents of God's Vengeance (14:18-32) – King Ahaz had compromised his allegiance and trust in the Lord, seeking instead to find safety by paying tribute to Assyria, who refused to help Judah. Philistia invaded the cities of the lowlands and the South of Judah (2 Chron 28:16-19). In the year King Ahaz died, Philistia saw Judah as a broken rod (Isaiah 14:29). But the faithlessness of a people does not dilute the faithfulness of God and Philistia forgot that God can turn rods into serpents (v29, Exod 7:8-13). He purposed to protect Judah and when Hezekiah took the throne, the Lord brought great vengeance upon Philistia (2 Kings 18:8). While Philistia was dissolved, the news of her destruction would not be heard, for it would pale in comparison to the news of Judah's deliverance from Assyria (v32). That would be the story remembered and Philistia forgotten.

Moab and the Conditions of Gentile Hope (15:1 – 16:14) – Moab was a Gentile nation to the east of Judah. The Moabites were the product of Lot's incestuous union with his daughter (Gen 19:30-38) and so they were a Gentile-cousin of sorts to Israel. Israel was not to harass Moab when they came out of Egypt (Deut 2:9), but Moab was cursed, cut off from Israel for ten generations, when they refused to give bread and water to Israel (Deut 23:3-4). Now, faithful to the promises to David, Zion is offered as a place of refuge for these Gentiles. But there is a problem.

The Burden of Moab's Ruin (15:1-4) – City after city is fallen, there is weeping in their temples, and national lamentation. Even the armed soldiers cry out in their loss. A horrible destruction of Moab is portrayed.

The Lord's Grief over Moab (15:5-9) – Moab had turned to her gods (15:2) but even so, the Lord grieves over Moab's decision to turn to the false gods and to her destruction (v5), as they flee, as Lot had, to Zoar. And yet, it is the hand of the Lord which has brought this and will bring more (v9). *"Tears and the utmost wrath are at one in the divine nature"* (Motyer).

Moab's Plea for Refuge in Zion (16:1-4) – The scene changes and we are eavesdropping on the Moabite Cabinet meeting at Sela. In panting, breathless Hebrew we catch the panic of the leaders saying one thing and then another as they discuss sending an envoy to Judah for refuge from the invaders.

The Offer from Zion (16:5) – Chiastically, this verse is right in the middle of the burden and so it should be seen as central and noteworthy. This is the response from Judah, from Zion, and from the Lord: the throne of God is established in mercy and so come. But only One will sit on that throne and He will judge all in righteousness. Do you want to the mercy of this One? Then you must come to the One who has this mercy.

The Pride of Moab, Source of Downfall (16:6-8) – In her pride, Moab rejects the offer. *"To reject the way of faith for self-confidence is to retreat into a dream world – except that its consequences (vv7-8) are far from dreamlike..."* (Motyer).

The Lord's Grief over Moab (16:9-14) – Again the Lord grieves with and for Moab (v9), their gods will provide no solution (v12). A nation can be in a place of gladness and plenty, but if the Lord is not their God in only a moment it can all be gone (v10) for that kind of joy has no eternal foundation. The Lord's heart resounds for Moab (v11) even though His pronounced judgment is set (vv13-14). This is the heart that loves the world. This is the heart that did something for the world (John 3:16). The world would not stay in this sorry place of condemnation (John 3:17).

Why This is a Message for Israel (Luke 19:41-44) – I mentioned that we do not know if these burdens were ever preached to these nations. They are primarily lessons for Judah, for all of Israel, and for God's people in all times. Jerusalem, when she rejected her Messiah even as she had the prophets, fell under condemnation and this was the purpose of God. Nevertheless, Jesus wept over the decision the city and nation made (also Ezek 33:10-11). Luke is Paul's companion, and this may be why this gospel alone records this scene, for Paul, a missionary to the Gentiles, also lamented over his Jewish brothers and sisters to come to faith (Rom 9:1-5).

Why This is a Message for the Church and the Nations Today (Acts 4:12) – There is only one Way of salvation for every person and for every nation. You cannot have the blessing of God while rejecting the God of blessing. Nor the protection, nor the mercy and grace, nor eternal life, nor the peace, nor the joy... Without the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot expect to receive the wonderful things of God. The church has foolishly lost this message, treating the world as though it was made up of two kingdoms. But Jesus is Lord of all and the church must return to preaching this message: each nation has a King Who sits on the throne of mercy - and His name is Jesus.