

September 19

Scriptures: Read Jeremiah 48 & 49

Key Verse: “in the latter days: I will bring back the [Gentile] captives says the Lord.”
(Jeremiah 49:39)

Overview

Chapter 48 relates the judgment upon Moab, the land southeast of the Dead Sea. The Moabites were descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:37), and their relationship with the Hebrews was usually hostile. After the Exodus, they refused to let Israel cross through their territory. They hired Balaam to curse Israel, and they sent their women to seduce them into idolatry (Num. chapters 22 to 25). Moab was subjected by David (2 Sam. 8:2), then Assyria, and finally by Babylon, which is foretold here (cf. Isa. 15). Eventually they disappeared as a nation. Their remnant was likely absorbed by the Arabs. The most noteworthy Moabite is Ruth, the great-grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus (Matt. 1:5; Luke 3:32).

The reasons for the appointed “year of their punishment” (48:44) were many. They trusted in their “works” and wealth rather than God, a common sin even today. Although their forefather Lot believed in the one true God, they had become idolatrous, adopting a territorial god by the name of Chemosh and putting their trust in him (48:35; cf. Num. 21:29; 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:13), yet they would come to be ashamed of Chemosh, just as Israel was ashamed of their calf worship established by Jeroboam in Bethel (48:13; 1 Kings 12:26-33). Other reasons cited were because of Moab’s wrath, lies (48:30), pride, self-glory, haughty spirit (48:29, 42; cf. Prov. 16:18), and carelessness (48:11); but her strength (“horn”) would be broken, as all her fortified cities would fall. She would be an object of ridicule, just as she had scorned Israel (48:25-27). Jeremiah, however, ended on a note of hope. The nation would perish, but the Lord would save some of the Moabites, for “in the latter days” some would come into the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus (48:47).

The next prophecy is against the Ammonites (east of the Jordan), descendants of Lot’s son Ben-Ammi (Gen. 19:38). Their history closely parallels that of the Moabites who lived south of them. They also had a hostile relationship with Israel. Their national god was Milcom (or Molech), to whom they performed child sacrifices. They influenced Israel to commit the same abomination, which was strictly prohibited by the law (1 Kings 11:5, 7, 33; 2 Kings 23:13; Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5). The Ammonites were pleased when the Assyrians took the Gadites captive, and they jumped at the chance to inhabit their territory and their cities (49:1). These reasons, and because they trusted in their treasures (49:4b), seem to be the factors contributing to their prophesied destruction. Their capital city of Rabbah (modern Amman in Jordan) would be cut to the ground and the people driven out. Like the Moabites, however, the Lord would graciously bring some Ammonites into the Kingdom of God (49:6).

Edom also would not be spared from the judgment of God. The Edomites were descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:1-19). They inhabited the territory south of the Dead Sea, also called the land of Seir (cf. Num. 24:18). They too were hostile to the Israelites and rejoiced when Jerusalem fell (Ps. 137:7). Afterwards, many Edomites inhabited the area of Southern Judah, and came to be

known as Idumeans. This prophecy about Edom's complete and merciless destruction was fulfilled in the third century B.C., when they were dispossessed by the Nabateans. Even the pride of their heart, the rock of Petra, could not save them (49:16). Edom's remnant was absorbed with the Jews during the period of the Maccabees. The prophet Obadiah had prophesied earlier the same complete end of the nation of Edom. However, the Lord would preserve a few and some would put their trust in Him (49:11; cf. Amos 9:11-12; for fulfillment see Acts 15:14-18).

Damascus, the beautiful capital city of Aram (Syria), was subjected by Assyria, then Egypt, and finally was invaded and burned to destruction by the Babylonians, as Jeremiah prophesies here (cf. Isa. 17:1-3). "Ben-Hadad" was the name of many Syrian kings (49:27; 1 Kings 15:18, 20; 2 Kings 13:24). In the history of 1 and 2 Kings, the Arameans were constantly in conflict with Israel and Judah, or in alliance with Israel against Judah.

The prophecies against Kedar and Hazor refer to the desert people of the east (Arabia). "Kedar" was the name of a nomadic tribe, descendants of Ishmael, who were known for their violence (Gen. 25:13; Ps. 120:5-7). Hazor of the desert (from the Hebrew root meaning "settlement") was inhabited by Arab people who were likely semi-nomadic. Jeremiah prophesies that they would be plundered by the Babylonians, which history confirms when Babylon invaded the Arab territory. Although we read no word of a future hope here, the prophet Isaiah prophesied that they shall be accepted in the Kingdom of God (Isa. 60:7), and on the Day of Pentecost Peter preached to some Arabs who likely came to believe in Jesus (Acts. 2:11, 41).

The final judgment in chapter 49 is against Elam, an ancient civilization east of Babylon (cf. Gen. 14:1). Why would Jeremiah concern himself with such a distant nation? The people of Judah were to be encouraged that their God was the God of the whole world, and not even the most ancient of peoples were beyond His jurisdiction, for His throne is over Elam (49:38). Although the Elamites would come under his wrath, He would also save some of them "in the latter days", the period of time that began at Pentecost (Acts 2:9, 16-17, 41).

Prayer

Dear Lord, we know judgment is coming to the whole world. Thank You that Your gospel is being preached in the whole world and that there will be believers from all nations, tongues and races represented in the Family of God. We believe in You, Lord Jesus. Thank You for having mercy on us.