



I have heard the reproach of Moab

PROFITING FROM THE PROPHETS
by: Steven J. Wallace

"I have heard the reproach of Moab, and of the people of Ammon, with which they reproached My people, And made threats against their borders. Therefore, Says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Moab shall be like Sodom, and the people of Ammon like Gomorrah—Overrun with weeds and salt pits, And a perpetual desolation. The residue of My people shall plunder them, and the remnant of My people shall possess them" (Zeph. 2:8, 9, NKJV).



the insults have arrogant as I live,' 'Surely

Moab and Ammon were two contemporary countries with Old Testament Israel. Their originator was a man named "Lot," Abraham's nephew. Lot had two sons, Moab, and Ben-Ammi, who were born shortly after God had destroyed the immoral cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:30-38). Their history with Israel was filled with distrust, violence and heated hatred. The amazing thing in Zephaniah's day is that Moab and Ammon were headed towards a history that they had so long known and feared in reference to their forefather—*Sodom's fate!* Previously, Lot was a resident of Sodom (Gen. 14:12). In fact, at one time he was rescued by Abraham when he and others from Sodom were taken captive by a foreign confederacy of kings. Subsequent to this, he was rescued by two angels when they led him out

of the wicked city. This escape was followed by an overthrow of fire like no city has ever seen since (Gen. 19). Sodom and Gomorrah were left for all men as an example of God's vengeance upon a sinful society (Jude v. 7). God promised to make Moab like Sodom . . . so, where is Moab today?

The apostle Peter spoke of Lot's deliverance in the New Testament, saying, "*and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)*" (2 Pet. 2:7, 8). Yet, Zephaniah wrote to Lot's descendants in the seventh century B.C. warning against their "lawless deeds."

There are several profound points that stand out from the above.

1. Cities and nations may have a righteous element in their beginning, but they can become thoroughly corrupt in time. God still reigns despite such, however.
2. Children do not inherit the righteousness or the wickedness of their forefathers. Lot was righteous but these descendants were wicked. In accordance with this, Ezekiel penned, "*The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself*" (Ezek. 18:20).
3. God hears what we say! God *heard* the reproach and insults uttered by the nations of Moab and Ammon regarding His people. Some people today do not know how to disagree with each other in an honorable way. It is a temptation that many fall for by reducing a controversy to merely hurling insults and unfounded accusations. I ask, "Does God not hear our insults too?"
4. There can be major consequences from the way we talk. These two nations were doomed because of what they were saying. "*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people*" (Prov. 14:34). Sometimes we minimize sins of the tongue, yet, where are Moab and Ammon today among the lot of nations? We too shall be judge by our words (Matt. 12:26). What does the Lord hear from our lips? What are we saying about God's church? Is our speech any better than Moab's?

Be careful what you say and do; begin honoring God with your life, your tongue and your deeds. God destroyed these nations because they spoke and acted arrogantly. What will He do to us on judgment day? "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" (Heb. 10:31). "*Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD'S anger*" (Zeph. 2:3).