

Lamentations 4 - Fourth Dirge: The Lord's Anger

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Lamentations 4

IV. God's anger resulting in Jerusalem's destruction (Lam 4:1-22)

- (1) Contrast before and after 586 BC (4:1-11)
 - (A) First round (4:1-6)
 - (a) Introduction (4:1)

1 How dark the gold has become, *How* the pure gold has changed! The sacred stones are spilled out At the corner of every street.

1 How dark the gold has become, *How* the pure gold has changed! The sacred stones are poured out At the corner of every street.

1 How tarnished the gold has become, the finest gold debased! Sacred stones have been scattered at every street corner.

1 How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.

(b) Jerusalem's precious sons became mere earthen jars (4:2)

2 The precious sons of Zion, Weighed against pure gold, How they are regarded as earthenware jars, The work of a potter's hands!

2 The precious sons of Zion, Weighed against fine gold, How they are regarded as earthen jars, The work of a potter's hands!

2 Though the precious people of Zion were like fine gold, how they are valued like clay vessels, the handiwork of a potter!

2 The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!

- Jeremiah is comparing gold to the young men of Zion. The fine young men of Judah who were like gold vessels are now like earthen vessels of clay. They have been broken.

— That is the terrifying thing about warfare: it eliminates the finest young men of a nation.

— Paul likens the believer to a clay vessel (2 Tim 2:21; Rom 9:21)

— However, the issue is not of what material the vessels are made, but how they are being used. Are we vessels for the Master's use or for our own use?

(c) Mothers ceased meeting the physical needs of their children (4:3-4)

3 Even jackals offer the breast, They nurse their young; *But* the daughter of my people has proved herself cruel, Like ostriches in the wilderness.

3 Even jackals offer the breast, They nurse their young; *But* the daughter of my people has become cruel Like ostriches in the wilderness.

3 Even wild animals nurse, suckling their young; but the women of my people are cruel, like ostriches in the wilderness.

3 Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

4 The tongue of the infant clings To the roof of its mouth because of thirst; The children ask for bread, *But* no one breaks *it* for them.

4 The tongue of the infant cleaves To the roof of its mouth because of thirst; The little ones ask for bread, *But* no one breaks *it* for them.

4 The nursing child's tongue cleaves to its palate from thirst. Young children beg for bread, but no one gives them any.

4 The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them.

- The siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was a horrible thing. The people suffered inside the city. Instead of surrendering, they held out and saw their little babies die.

(d) Wealthy became poor (4:5)

5 Those who used to eat delicacies Are made to tremble in the streets; Those who were raised in crimson *clothing* Embrace garbage heaps.

5 Those who ate delicacies Are desolate in the streets; Those reared in purple Embrace ash pits.

5 Those who enjoyed delicacies lie desolate in the streets. Those who were reared wearing purple scavenge in piles of trash.

5 They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.

- They had lived in luxury, they had had big supermarkets, but now the shelves of the supermarkets are bare. They no longer can enjoy the conveniences they once had—in fact, they don't have any at all.

(e) Reason: sin (4:6)

6 For the wrongdoing of the daughter of my people Is greater than the sin of Sodom, Which was overthrown as in a moment, And no hands were turned toward her.

6 For the iniquity of the daughter of my people Is greater than the sin of Sodom, Which was overthrown as in a moment, And no hands were turned toward her.

6 The guilt of my cherished people surpasses the sin of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, without a hand to help her.

6 For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.

- God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, but God judged Jerusalem more severely. Why was that? Because the sin of Jerusalem was *worse than* that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

(B) Second round (4:7-11)

(a) Elites physically deteriorated (4:7-9)

7 Her consecrated ones were purer than snow, They shined more than milk; They were more ruddy *in* body than pearls of coral, Their form *was like* lapis lazuli.

7 Her consecrated ones were purer than snow, They were whiter than milk; They were more ruddy *in* body than corals, Their polishing *was like* lapis lazuli.

7 Her princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk. Their bodies were more ruddy than rubies, their beards like the color of precious stones.

7 Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire:

- A Nazirite was one who took a voluntary oath, and many did it. They were complimented; they looked good. But it was all on the outside; their hearts were not changed.

8 Their appearance is darker than soot, They are not recognized in the streets; Their skin is shriveled on their bones, It is dry, it has become like wood.

8 Their appearance is blacker than soot, They are not recognized in the streets; Their skin is shriveled on their bones, It is withered, it has become like wood.

8 Now their faces are blacker than coal; they are unrecognized in the streets. Their skin clings to their bones; it has become dry like a stick.

8 Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick.

9 Better *off* are those killed by the sword Than those killed by hunger; For they waste away, stricken By the lack of the produce of the field.

9 Better are those slain with the sword Than those slain with hunger; For they pine away, being stricken For lack of the fruits of the field.

9 Those who die by the sword are better off than those who die from starvation, who slowly waste away like those pierced through for lack of food from the fields.

9 They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field.

- He would rather be dead than alive, for the condition of those who remained was so terrible

(b) Mothers have eaten their children (4:10)

10 The hands of compassionate women Boiled their own children; They became food for them Due to the destruction of the daughter of my people.

10 The hands of compassionate women Boiled their own children; They became food for them Because of the destruction of the daughter of my people.

10 With their own hands, compassionate women boil their own children— they become their food— when my beloved people were destroyed.

10 The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

(c) Reason: God's anger (4:11)

11 The LORD has expended His wrath, He has poured out His fierce anger; And He has kindled a fire in Zion, And it has consumed its foundations.

11 The LORD has accomplished His wrath, He has poured out His fierce anger; And He has kindled a fire in Zion Which has consumed its foundations.

11 The LORD has exhausted his wrath, pouring out his fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion, consuming its foundations.

11 The LORD hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof.

- The same thing took place when Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. The people got so hungry that mothers had to give their own babies to be eaten!

(2) Siege described (4:12-20)

(A) Jerusalem's prior perceived invulnerability (4:12)

12 The kings of the earth did not believe, Nor *did* any of the inhabitants of the world, That **the adversary** and the enemy Would enter the gates of Jerusalem.

12 The kings of the earth did not believe, Nor *did* any of the inhabitants of the world, That the adversary and the enemy Could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

12 None of the kings of the earth would have believed, nor the world's inhabitants, that the adversary and the enemy could have breached the gates of Jerusalem.

12 The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.

- "...the adversary" - an OT allusion to the Antichrist; see also Ps 74:8-10; Is 59:19; Amos 3:11; see [Allusions to the Antichrist](#)

(B) Lack of aid to those scattered (4:13-16)

13 Because of the sins of her prophets *And* the wrongdoings of her priests, Who have shed in her midst The blood of the righteous,

13 Because of the sins of her prophets *And* the iniquities of her priests, Who have shed in her midst The blood of the righteous;

13 Due to the sins committed by her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests who shed in her midst, the blood of the righteous,

13 For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her,

14 They wandered, blind, in the streets; They were defiled with blood, Such that no one could touch their garments.

14 They wandered, blind, in the streets; They were defiled with blood So that no one could touch their garments.

14 people stagger around in the streets like the blind, defiled by blood unclean so that no one is able to touch their clothing.

14 They have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments.

- Because the false prophets and the priests did not tell the people the truth, they are guilty of murder—that is God's estimate of it. — A preacher who won't preach the Word of

God and tell the people how they might be saved is put in this classification.

15 "Keep away! Unclean!" they cried out of themselves. "Keep away, keep away, do not touch!" For they distanced themselves as well as wandered; *People* among the nations said, "They shall not continue to reside *with us*."

15 "Depart! Unclean!" they cried of themselves. "Depart, depart, do not touch!" So they fled and wandered; *Men* among the nations said, "They shall not continue to dwell *with us*."

15 "Go away! Unclean!" they shouted at them. "Go away! Go away! Don't touch!" When they fled away and wandered, those among the nations decreed, "They cannot live here!"

15 They cried unto them, Depart ye; it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not: when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn there.

16 The presence of the LORD has scattered them, He will not continue to look at them; They did not honor the priests, They did not favor the elders.

16 The presence of the LORD has scattered them, He will not continue to regard them; They did not honor the priests, They did not favor the elders.

16 The LORD himself separated them; he will do nothing more for them. They did not respect their own priests; they did not honor their elders.

16 The anger of the LORD hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders.

(C) No one could help Jerusalem (4:17)

17 Yet our eyes failed, *Looking* for help was useless; At our observation point we have watched For a nation that could not save.

17 Yet our eyes failed, *Looking* for help was useless; In our watching we have watched For a nation that could not save.

17 Our eyes failed, searching in vain for hope; we kept watching and looking for a nation that would not help.

17 As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save us.

(D) No one would escape Jerusalem's attackers (4:18-20)

18 They hunted our steps So that we could not walk in our streets; Our end drew near, Our days were finished For our end had come.

18 They hunted our steps So that we could not walk in our streets; Our end drew near, Our days were finished For our end had come.

18 Our steps were closely stalked, so we couldn't travel on our own streets. Our end is near, our days are over; indeed, our end has come.

18 They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.

- The people paid no attention to the priests who were giving out the Word of God.

Jeremiah was a prophet of God, and they paid no attention to him at all. God judged the people for that. The Lord says that the problem was that Judah was looking to Egypt for help, and Egypt was *not* a help; they were an enemy.

- If the first cause of Jerusalem's siege was the sin of the prophets and priests (v13-16), the second cause was the futility of foreign alliances: Instead of trusting in God, Jerusalem had turned to Egypt for protection from Babylon. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had warned against the futility of trusting in Egypt for protection (Jer 37:6-10; Ezek 29:6-7)

- That false hope brought only bitter grief when Babylon's armies, swifter than eagles (Hab 1:8) finally captured Jerusalem, pursuing those who tried to escape, and the end came.

19 Our pursuers were swifter Than the eagles of the sky; They chased us on the mountains, They waited in ambush for us in the wilderness.

19 Our pursuers were swifter Than the eagles of the sky; They chased us on the mountains, They waited in ambush for us in the wilderness.

19 Our pursuers were swifter than soaring eagles; they pursued us over the mountains, lying in wait for us in the wilderness.

19 Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.

20 The breath of our nostrils, the LORD'S anointed, Was captured in their pits, Of whom we had said, "In his shadow We shall live among the nations."

20 The breath of our nostrils, the LORD's anointed, Was captured in their pits, Of whom we had said, "Under his shadow We shall live among the nations."

20 The LORD's anointed, the breath of our life, was captured in their pits. About him we had said, "Under his protection we will survive among the nations."

20 The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

- What a picture of that people as they are today! They are scattered among the heathen.

The third cause of Jerusalem's siege and fall was Zedekiah her king. The leader Jerusalem looked to for security (her very life breath and her shadow) was powerless to protect her.

(3) Future hope: God will vindicate Zion and judge her oppressors (4:21-22)

21 Rejoice and be joyful, daughter of Edom, Who lives in the land of Uz; *But* the cup will pass to you as well, You will become drunk and expose yourself.

21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, Who dwells in the land of Uz; *But* the cup will come around to you as well, You will become drunk and make yourself naked.

21 Celebrate and rejoice, you women of Edom, who live in the land of Uz. But to you the cup also will pass— you will become drunk and stripped naked.

21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz; the cup also shall pass through unto thee: thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked.

22 *The punishment* of your wrongdoing has been completed, daughter of Zion; He will no longer exile you. *But* He will punish your wrongdoing, daughter of Edom; He will expose your sins!

22 *The punishment* of your iniquity has been completed, O daughter of Zion; He will exile you no longer. *But* He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will expose your sins!

22 The punishment for your sin is complete, you women of Zion, and God will no longer exile you. He will punish your iniquity, you women of Edom, and he will expose your sins.

22 The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins.

- After the judgment, God has promised that He will permanently place Israel in the land (after the "Time of Jacob's Trouble")