

The Lord's Anger Against His People

Lamentations 2

Lamentations 2:1-10 - *"How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger! He cast down from heaven to the earth the beauty of Israel, and did not remember His footstool in the day of His anger. ² The Lord has swallowed up and has not pitied all the dwelling places of Jacob. He has thrown down in His wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah. He has brought them down to the ground; He has profaned the kingdom and its princes. ³ He has cut off in fierce anger every horn of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy. He has blazed against Jacob like a flaming fire, devouring all around. ⁴ Standing like an enemy, He has bent His bow; with His right hand, like an adversary, He has slain all who were pleasing to His eye. On the tent of the daughter of Zion, He has poured out His fury like fire. ⁵ The Lord was like an enemy. He has swallowed up Israel. He has swallowed up all her palaces. He has destroyed her strongholds, and has increased mourning and lamentation in the daughter of Judah. ⁶ He has done violence to His tabernacle, as if it were a garden. He has destroyed His place of assembly. The Lord has caused the appointed feasts and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion. In His burning indignation He has spurned the king and the priest. ⁷ The Lord has spurned His altar, He has abandoned His sanctuary; He has given up the walls of her palaces into the hand of the enemy. They have made a noise in the house of the Lord as on the day of a set feast. ⁸ The Lord has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion. He has stretched out a line; He has not withdrawn His hand from destroying. Therefore, He has caused the rampart and wall to lament; they languished together. ⁹ Her gates have sunk into the ground. He has destroyed and broken her bars. Her king and her princes are among the nations. The Law is no more, and her prophets find no vision from the Lord. ¹⁰ The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground and keep silence. They throw dust on their heads and gird themselves with sackcloth. The virgins of Jerusalem bow their heads to the ground."*

Background Notes

In the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament), a superscription was written at the beginning of the book of Lamentations. It says: *"Jeremiah sat weeping and lamented through this lamentation over Jerusalem."* Jeremiah is known as the "Weeping Prophet" because of what we read in both Jeremiah and Lamentations. *"Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"* (Jeremiah 9:1). And Lamentations 2:11 - *"My eyes fail with tears; my heart is troubled..."*

Jeremiah was weeping because of the sin of God's people, and because of the devastation that had fallen upon Jerusalem and the nation of Judah because of God's judgment of their sin. God had allowed Nebuchadnezzar and his

Babylonian forces to overrun Jerusalem, with great loss of life. They burned the Temple to the ground and took most of the remaining people into captivity in Babylon. The entire book of Lamentations is a series of funeral dirges, written in moving Hebrew poetry, that lament the tremendous loss of life, the property, and the horrible conditions that occurred when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 BC.

The Lamentations 2 lament especially emphasized the fact that God allowed all of this turmoil, tragedy, devastation, and death. It was His judgment for sin - the direct result of many years of rebellion and sin of the people of Jerusalem and the nation of Judah.

Doctrinal Points

1. The wrath of God against sin results in national turmoil.

In verses 1-10, the first thing we notice is that Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian forces were **not** the cause of Jerusalem's devastation and desolation. No – the Lord Himself allowed it. The anger and wrath of God against sin brought this disaster upon Jerusalem. *"In the day of His anger" (v1). "He has thrown down in His wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah" (2). "He has cut off in fierce anger every horn of Israel"(v3). "He has poured out His fury like fire" (v5). "In His burning indignation He has spurned the king and the priest" (v6).*

"But wait a minute," you may say. "I thought God was a God of **love**. I didn't know that God got angry and had wrath!" Yes, God **is** a God of love - but He is also a just and holy God, and He hates sin. Therefore, He does indeed get angry when people sin! Psalm 7:11 says that God is angry with the wicked every day,

Notice the national turmoil that resulted in Judah and the capital city of Jerusalem because of God's wrath against sin. The glory of Israel as a nation was lost (v1). Many people were killed (v2). Judah was humbled, with no national defense (v2-3). The nation's infrastructure was destroyed (v4-5). God rejected the heartless worship of His sinful people, and allowed His beautiful Temple to be destroyed (v6). He allowed the enemy to enter and desecrate the Holy Place of His Temple (v7). The walls of Jerusalem were broken down (v8). The city gates were no longer a protection for the people (v9). The nation's leaders were captives on their way to Babylon, or helpless in grief (v9-10). What a sad picture of a nation in utter turmoil!

Sadly, this could be truly said of our own nation in the not-too-distant future. The further this nation turns away from God, from moral and spiritual values, and from the standards of Scripture, the more the wrath of God will be revealed - with all its devastating consequences. The wrath of God against sin results in national turmoil.

2. The wrath of God against sin results in personal tragedy

In verses 11-22, take note of all the personal pain and grief that accompanied the fall of Jerusalem. All of this was part of the sad fallout that comes when people turn away from God. People were starving in the streets and children were dying in their mothers' arms.

Lamentations 2:11-20 - *"My eyes fail with tears. My heart is troubled. My bile is poured on the ground because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, because the children and the infants faint in the streets of the city. ¹² They say to their mothers, "Where is grain and wine?" as they swoon like the wounded in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out in their mothers' bosom. ¹³ How shall I console you? To what shall I liken you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare with you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is spread wide as the sea. Who can heal you? ¹⁴ Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions. They have not uncovered your iniquity, to bring back your captives, but have envisioned for you false prophecies and delusions.*

¹⁵ All who pass by clap their hands at you; they hiss and shake their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem: "Is this the city that is called 'The perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?'" ¹⁶ All your enemies have opened their mouth against you; they hiss and gnash their teeth. They say, "We have swallowed her up! Surely this is the day we have waited for. We have found it, we have seen it!" ¹⁷ The Lord has done what He purposed. He has fulfilled His word that He commanded in days of old. He has thrown down and has not pitied, and He has caused an enemy to rejoice over you. He has exalted the horn of your adversaries.

¹⁸ Their heart cried out to the Lord, "O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night. Give yourself no relief. Give your eyes no rest.

¹⁹ "Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches. Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands toward Him for the life of your young children who faint from hunger at the head of every street." ²⁰ "See, O Lord, and consider! To whom have You done this? Should the women eat their offspring - the children they have cuddled?"

Verses 13-14 revealed the personal grief that comes when people believe the false predictions of peace that is preached by false prophets - then and today. Verses 15-17 we see that personal tragedy is felt when a nation is mocked and despised by everyone.

The terrible personal pain of watching your children die of starvation was described in verses 18-19. During the 1-½ years of the starvation siege of Jerusalem, cannibalism was practiced - even the horrible act of women eating their own children (v20).

From verse 20 to the end of the chapter, the slaughter in Jerusalem was like the day of sacrifice when a great number of animals were sacrificed. Only this time it was not animals that were sacrificed - but people! Young and old, prophets and priests, and entire families were wiped out.

Lamentations 2:20-22 - *“Should the priest and prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord? ²¹ “Young and old lie on the ground in the streets. My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword. You have slain them in the day of Your anger; You have slaughtered and not pitied. ²² “You have invited as to a feast day the terrors that surround me. In the day of the Lord’s anger there was no refugee or survivor. Those whom I have borne and brought up, My enemies have destroyed.”*

What a terrible tragedy! Some folks will always find fault with God for allowing such conditions. The truth is that, in **God’s moral universe**, judgment is the direct consequence of sin against God. The wrath of God against sin results in personal tragedy.

Practical Application

For godly gain, expect some personal pain.

Hebrews 12:5-6 says, *“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”*

Would any one of you dare to say that you’re a perfect Christian? Would you dare to say that you don’t need any discipline? I doubt it!

Hebrews 12:11 says, *“No chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”* Notice –**God’s discipline involves personal pain!** *“For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant...”* (ESV).

This truth is demonstrated in the book of Lamentations. God had to bring down His axe of discipline on His people - because of their sin. It was very painful - but it did result in godly gain. The Babylonian exile cured the Jewish people of idolatry. A new generation returned to the Land - and to the Lord - 70 years later.

God’s people today also experience God’s discipline for their sin - to correct them and to draw them into a closer walk with Him. He disciplines those whom He **loves** (Hebrews 12:6), because He wants only the best for them! He wants the *“peaceable fruit of righteousness”* to be displayed in our lives.

Although His discipline can be quite painful at times, it’s well worthwhile because it brings about godly gain.

For godly gain, expect some personal pain.