

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Lamentations Chapter 4

8/12/15

Bible Study Notes

Jerusalem After The Fall - Verses 1-6

1 How the gold has lost its luster, the fine gold become dull! The sacred gems are scattered at the head of every street. **2** How the precious sons of Zion, once worth their weight in gold, are now considered as pots of clay, the work of a potter's hands! **3** Even jackals offer their breasts to nurse their young, but my people have become heartless like ostriches in the desert. **4** Because of thirst the infant's tongue sticks to the roof of its mouth; the children beg for bread, but no one gives it to them. **5** Those who once ate delicacies are destitute in the streets. Those nurtured in purple now lie on ash heaps. **6** The punishment of my people is greater than that of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment without a hand turned to help her.

4:1-1 This chapter contrasts the situation before the siege of Jerusalem with the situation after the siege. The sights and sounds of prosperity were gone because of the people's sin. This chapter warns us not to assume that when life is going well, it will always stay that way. We must be careful not to glory in our prosperity or we will fall into spiritual poverty.

4:1-5 When a city was under siege, the city wall—built for protection—sealed the people inside. They could not get out to the fields to get food and water because the enemy was camped around the city. As food in the city ran out, the people watched their enemies harvest and eat the food in the fields. The siege was a test of wills to see which army could outlast the other. Jerusalem was under siege for two years. Life became so harsh that people even ate their own children, and dead bodies were left to rot in the streets. All hope was gone.

4:6 The city of Sodom, destroyed by burning sulfur from heaven because of its wickedness (Genesis 18:20-19:29), became a symbol of God's ultimate judgment. Yet the guilt of Jerusalem was even greater than that of Sodom! Jeremiah wasn't comparing sins but acknowledging that Sodom had few of the advantages and blessings that the people of Jerusalem had enjoyed from God. Jerusalem's greater guilt was in turning away in spite of the city's countless God-given benefits.

Jerusalem After The Fall - Verses 7-16

7 Their princes were brighter than snow and whiter than milk, their bodies more ruddy than rubies, their appearance like sapphires. 8 But now they are blacker than soot; they are not recognized in the streets. Their skin has shriveled on their bones; it has become as dry as a stick. 9 Those killed by the sword are better off than those who die of famine; racked with hunger, they waste away for lack of food from the field. 10 With their own hands compassionate women have cooked their own children, who became their food when my people were destroyed. 11 The LORD has given full vent to his wrath; he has poured out his fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion that consumed her foundations. 12 The kings of the earth did not believe, nor did any of the world's people, that enemies and foes could enter the gates of Jerusalem. 13 But it happened because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed within her the blood of the righteous. 14 Now they grope through the streets like men who are blind. They are so defiled with blood that no one dares to touch their garments. 15 "Go away! You are unclean!" men cry to them. "Away! Away! Don't touch us!" When they flee and wander about, people among the nations say, "They can stay here no longer." 16 The LORD himself has scattered them; he no longer watches over them. The priests are shown no honor, the elders no favor.

4:13-15 To be defiled or unclean meant to be unfit to enter the temple or to worship before God. The priests and prophets should have been the most careful to maintain ceremonial purity so that they could continue to perform their duties before God. But many priests and prophets did evil and were defiled. As the nation's leaders, their example led the people into sin and caused the ultimate downfall of the nation and its capital city, Jerusalem.

The People of Zion Speak Out - Verses 17-20

17 Moreover, our eyes failed, looking in vain for help; from our towers we watched for a nation that could not save us. 18 Men stalked us at every step, so we could not walk in our streets. Our end was near, our days were numbered, for our end had come. 19 Our pursuers were swifter than eagles in the sky; they chased us over the mountains and lay in wait for us in the desert. 20 The LORD's anointed, our very life breath, was caught in their traps. We thought that under his shadow we would live among the nations.

4:17 Judah had asked Egypt to help them fight the Babylonian army. Egypt gave Judah false hope by setting out help them, but then quickly retreated (Jeremiah 37:5-7). Jeremiah had warned Judah not to ally itself with Egypt. He told the leaders to rely on God, but they refused to listen.

4:20 King Zedekiah, although called "the LORD's anointed," had little spiritual depth and leadership power. Instead of putting his faith in God and listening to God's true prophet, Jeremiah, he listened to the false prophets. To make matters worse, the people chose to follow and trust in their king (2 Chronicles 36:11-16). They chose the path of false confidence and complacency, wanting to feel secure rather than to follow the directives God was giving his people through Jeremiah. But the object of their confidence—King Zedekiah—was captured.

The Prophet Speaks Out: Be Warned about Edom's Impending Doom - Verses 21-22

21 Rejoice and be glad, O Daughter of Edom, you who live in the land of Uz. But to you also the cup will be passed; you will be drunk and stripped naked. **22** O Daughter of Zion, your punishment will end; he will not prolong your exile. But, O Daughter of Edom, he will punish your sin and expose your wickedness.

4:21-22 Edom was Judah's archenemy, even though they had a common ancestor, Isaac (see Genesis 25:19-26; 36:1). Edom had actively aided Babylon in the siege of Jerusalem. As a reward, Nebuchadnezzar gave the outlying lands of Judah to Edom. Jeremiah said that the nation of Edom would be judged for treachery against Judah—in essence, against its own relatives. (See also Jeremiah 49:7-22; Ezekiel 25:12-14; Amos 9:12; Obadiah 1:1-21.)