**Lamentations 2**

**I. Text Of Chapter 2 – “Divine Judgment” (3.5-4 minutes to read)**

 *A. The Glorious One Is Clothed With A Cloud (2:1-10)*

 1. Glory was often depicted as a cloud, especially in connection with the Temple (1Kgs. 8-9). Here it is a thundercloud & eclipse (cf. Pss. 18:12; 97:2; Is. 19:1; Jer. 4:13; Nah. 1:3; Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7) & is unsparing, even on the footstool of the Lord (i.e. the Temple, 1Chron. 28:2).

 2. In verses 2f, God is pinpointed as the source of this calamity. These were direct acts of judgment upon a disobedient and obstinate people. He has decimated everything from the lodging of shepherds in the open country to the fortified cities.

 3. “All the horn of Israel” is cut off. This indicates that no strength remains. Contrast w/ God’s exaltation of the horn of Judah’s enemies (v. 17).

 4. Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are merely the bow of the Lord and the match that kindles God’s anger against the people (cf. Amos 2:4f).

 5. The Lord had taken numerous things away: the tabernacle, the places of assembly, the solemn feasts and sabbaths, the king and priest, the altar, the sanctuary, and the walls. The tabernacle in particular had been torn down as a simple garden shed. This would have been spiritually demoralizing and socially disabling.

 6. The interior of the city and holy artifacts are decimated & outer layers of protection are torn down as well. With the Temple gone, observance of some of the crucial elements of the Law would be impossible. Shouts of soldiers rather than festival-goers are heard. They have been measured w/ a measuring rod & found wanting (Amos 7:7-9).

 7. To make matters worse, the prophets received no vision of the Lord (cf. Mic. 3:6f; Am. 8:11f; Eze. 3:26). This is not totally absolute, since Daniel and others received visions and prophecies during this dark hour. It is possible that either this is a general statement of lack of revelation (most in line with the hyperbolic presentation of the second dirge) or specifically related to the false prophets.

 8. Verse 10 uses merism to depict the total devastation. Elders and young maidens/virgins alike lament what has befallen Jerusalem.

 *B. No Consolation for the Weary (2:11-16)*

 1. Jeremiah’s inner parts/heart/liver (Hebrew: *kabed* or heavy) tremble and his bile/spirit pours out as he observes the catastrophe around him. Children and babies are dying in the streets from starvation.

 2. The message of the false prophets had only deepened the devastation (cf. Jer. 28). Through hyperbolic language Jeremiah explains the total devastation (cf. Ps. 97:1-3). Babylon had been the rod of God’s anger.

 3. Outsiders would not help either. They wag their heads and hiss (as God had repeatedly said they would…). The *perfection of beauty* and the *joy of the whole earth* (cf. Solomon’s reign, esp. with the Queen of Sheba) had become a byword. Even though this was true, those who engaged in such mockery would be held accountable (cf. ch. 1; Jer. 46-51).

 *C. Only God Can Help (2:17-22)*

 1. The source of the calamity was God because of their sins and the source of healing because of their sins therefore needed to also be God, *“Therefore the prophet pleads for Judah to pour out her heart at every watch hour of the night for the lives of her children.”* (Harkrider, 134)

 2. Their judgment was an expression of the faithfulness of God, despite their infidelity (Lev. 26:14-20; Dt. 28:15, 37, 45-48). *“The priest and the prophet were slain in the very temple they had polluted with their idolatry, immorality, and false teaching (Jer. 7:30; 23:11-15; 32:34).”* (Humphries, 551)

 3. Jeremiah prays on behalf of the people for healing. He had been advised against this earlier by God, but now the destruction has come and healing can perhaps be found. Jeremiah appeals to the fact that Israel is God’s people. He pleads with God to observe the devastation and to extend an arm of mercy (cf. Jer. 14:17-22).

 4. One of the strongest images is of mothers eating their own children whom they have cuddled (cf. 4:4, 10). What a terrible picture of the disaster that befalls people because of sin! Contrast this with the hope after captivity (Zech. 8:5).

**II. Thought Questions For Chapter 2**

 A. God is depicted as a wall of flaming fire destroying His people in v. 3. What passage(s) call God a wall of flaming fire that serves to protect His people?

 B. What things, objects, and persons had the Lord taken from His people? Would God take things and people from us to gain our attention and help us turn from error of our ways? How do we know when this happens (if it still does)?

 C. What does it mean that the prophets received no vision from the Lord? (v. 9)

 D. Had God predetermined, regardless of Judah’s behavior, to punish (vv. 8, 17)?

 E. How was Judah exhorted to cry? (vv. 18f) How can tears help turn people around? *“At times of great emotional stress, weeping can be a profoundly therapeutic activity, and those who would internalize emotional turbulence by deliberately refraining from tears are inviting even more serious emotional, and possibly physical, repercussions. Cf. Christ at the grave of Lazarus (Jn. 11:35), His tears shed over Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41), and Paul’s advice in Romans 12:15)…The author is quite correct in urging his fellow-countrymen to give full expression to their turbulent emotions, which under the circumstances would be comparatively easy for them. As a result of this outpouring of grief they would go far towards achieving psychological catharsis. Such godly sorrow, if it worked towards repentance, would ultimately secure their deliverance (cf. 2 Cor. 7:10).”* (Harrison, 220f)

 F. How do we explain the perfect love of God in light of passages like Lam. 2? *“By isolating the fall of Jerusalem from the historical chain of cause and effect, it might be possible to regard God’s actions in decimating the population as unjust, unethical or unloving. But when the sequence is viewed as a whole, the destruction of the nation is seen as the fulfillment of the many promises of punishment for willful and open sin against God.”* (Harrison, 218)

 G. Throughout this chapter, the writer points to God & in a way confronts Him. Is it appropriate to do this? If so, how do we know when it is appropriate and when we have crossed the line?

**III. Applications For Chapter 2**

 A. The presence of a candlestick does not necessitate that the candlestick will never be snuffed out. Let us not become haughty against the Lord by taking pride in our religion and self-designate holiness.

 B. If we continually disregard God’s Word, He may take it out of our possession by allowing our disinterest to push it further away from us. Our actions may create a drought of God’s Word in our lives & spiritual torment may result.

 C. *“Lam. 2:17: The Lord will do what He has promised! He has promised judgment for us too, and we have assurance that God will fulfill His promises (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Pet. 3:9-10; Rom. 2:6-10).”* (Harkrider, 135)

 D. Satan makes temptation feel and appear harmless, beautiful, & w/o consequence. The harsh reality is that it is horribly ugly and destroys lives.

 E. *“The callous indifference of the wanton, selfish parents to the destiny of their offspring shows the depths of depravity to which the Judeans had sunk. Instead of bringing their children up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, they had sold them in emotional and spiritual bondage to Baal. Christian parents have an important responsibility in the matter of instilling Christian spiritual virtues in their children, while the latter in turn must be obedient and considerate (cf. Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20; 1 Tim. 5:4).”* (Harrison, 219)