

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Lamentations: Productively Learning From Sinful Failure

Part V: Dirge IV - God's Anger At His People's Sins

(Lamentations 4:1-22)

I. Introduction

- A. In times of spiritual failure followed by God's discipline, the believer is ripe to learn from his failure, what constitutes the burden of the prophet Jeremiah in Lamentations. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1207-1208)
- B. Lamentations 4:1-22, the fourth dirge on Jerusalem's fall, explains God's anger at His people's sins, informing us on both avoiding such sins and confessing them quickly for restoration to God's blessing (as follows):

II. God's Anger At His People's Sins, Lamentations 4:1-22.

- A. To clarify the extent of God's anger as expressed against His sinful people, Jeremiah contrasted the state of Jerusalem before the Babylonian siege with Jerusalem after it had been invaded, Lamentations 4:1-11:
 - 1. Where the inhabitants of the city had once been valued as gold and precious gems, they have become despised like mere, common, clay pots that could easily shatter and be discarded, Lamentations 4:1-2.
 - 2. Where mothers had once valued their infants so as to nurse them affectionately, the effects of the siege left mothers treating their babies with cruelty and no longer caring for them, and adults who once feasted on delicacies perished in the streets or sat in ash heaps in sickness, Lamentations 4:3-5; *Ibid.*, p. 1220.
 - 3. God's punishment had thus been greater on Jerusalem than on wicked Sodom, for Sodom was overthrown quickly where Jerusalem's sufferings had been prolonged with agonizing effects, Lamentations 4:6.
 - 4. Where princes had once enjoyed physical health in their wealth, they also now suffered the disfigurement of hunger, their skins being darkened and shriveled by the effects of famine, Lamentations 4:7-8; *Ibid.*
 - 5. Where children had once enjoyed being cared by their parents, they had since been butchered, cooked and eaten by hungry mothers, Lamentations 4:9-10.
 - 6. God's punishment had thus been fully vented on the city, consuming its people, Lamentations 4:11.
- B. Jeremiah then explained the key reason behind God's wrath was the failure of Judah's leaders, Lam. 4:12-20:
 - 1. Though Jerusalem was once thought to be impregnable by her kings due to her physical situation as a fortress hill that had a water supply within its walls as provided by king Hezekiah's underground aqueduct (*Ibid.*), Babylon had successfully invaded the city in divine judgment for Jerusalem's sins, Lam. 4:12.
 - 2. Jeremiah then named and explained those sins that had led to the city's fall in Lamentations 4:13-20:
 - a. First, God had judged the people for heeding their corrupt priests and prophets, Lam. 4:13-16: (1) where prophet and priest were supposed to be righteous mediators between God and the people, they had become corrupt, causing the death of innocent people by false prophecies of peace, Lam. 4:13; Jer. 28:1-17. (2) As a result, when the invasion exposed them to be lying spiritual leaders, the people so despised them that these men were shunned as unclean lepers, being forced out of the community, Lam. 4:14-16; *Ibid.*
 - b. Second, God had punished the city for forming foreign alliances instead of trusting in Him, Lam. 4:17-19: (1) In making alliances with foreign nations versus trusting in God, Judah had seen her allies fail to aid her, Lam. 4:17. (2) Thus, swift Babylon had captured Jerusalem's people as they tried to flee, v. 18-19.
 - c. Third, God had judged the city for her king's disobedience to God that affected the people, Lam. 4:20: (1) King Zedekiah under whom the people sought protection failed to obey God, so His blessing was removed from him so that Zedekiah was captured by Babylon, Lam. 4:20; Jer. 38:14-23; 52:1-6. (2) Thus, Zedekiah failed in his role as protective king to the demise of his subjects in Judah and Jerusalem.
- C. Finally, Jeremiah called for God to avenge Jerusalem of the Edomites who promoted her fall, Lam. 4:21-22:
 - 1. The Edomites had taken an active role in Jerusalem's fall, helping the Babylonians to capture and kill the people of the city, *Ibid.*, p. 1221. Obadiah 11-14 reveals that Edom, though a relative nation of Judah as Esau's descendants, had not helped Judah when she fell, she had rejoiced over Judah's fall, she had helped the Babylonians sack the fallen city and she had set up roadblocks to keep Hebrews from fleeing to safety.
 - 2. Jeremiah thus predicted that Edom herself would drink of the cup of the wrath of the Lord, Lam. 4:21. Though Judah would come out of captivity, Edom would only experience lasting judgment, Lam. 4:22.

Lesson: *God's anger was vented at the sins caused by Judah's leaders who had been raised up by God to minister protective truth, faith in God and justice, but who had miserably failed in their callings to the harm of the nation.*

Application: *(1) May we leaders fulfill our God-assigned tasks. (2) May we subordinates heed truly godly leaders.*