

Feeling Abandoned – Exposing Idols

Lamentations Series Number 4

Lamentations 4:1–22 (ESV) — 1 How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold is changed! The holy stones lie scattered at the head of every street. **2** The precious sons of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold, how they are regarded as earthen pots, the work of a potter's hands! **3** Even jackals offer the breast; they nurse their young; but the daughter of my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. **4** The tongue of the nursing infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children beg for food, but no one gives to them. **5** Those who once feasted on delicacies perish in the streets; those who were brought up in purple embrace ash heaps. **6** For the chastisement of the daughter of my people has been greater than the punishment of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, and no hands were wrung for her. **7** Her princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk; their bodies were more ruddy than coral, the beauty of their form was like sapphire. **8** Now their face is blacker than soot; they are not recognized in the streets; their skin has shriveled on their bones; it has become as dry as wood. **9** Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger, who wasted away, pierced by lack of the fruits of the field. **10** The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food during the destruction of the daughter of my people. **11** The LORD gave full vent to his wrath; he poured out his hot anger, and he kindled a fire in Zion that consumed its foundations. **12** The kings of the earth did not believe, nor any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem. **13** This was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in the midst of her the blood of the righteous. **14** They wandered, blind, through the streets; they were so defiled with blood that no one was able to touch their garments. **15** “Away! Unclean!” people cried at them. “Away! Away! Do not touch!” So they became fugitives and wanderers; people said among the nations, “They shall stay with us no longer.” **16** The LORD himself has scattered them; he will regard them no more; no honor was shown to the priests, no favor to the elders. **17** Our eyes failed, ever watching vainly for help; in our watching we watched for a nation which could not save. **18** They dogged our steps so that we could not walk in our streets; our end drew near; our days were numbered, for our end had come. **19** Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles in the heavens; they chased us on the mountains; they lay in wait for us in the wilderness. **20** The breath of our nostrils, the LORD's anointed, was captured in their pits, of whom we said, “Under his shadow we shall live among the nations.” **21** Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, you who dwell in the land of Uz; but to you also the cup shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare. **22** The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is accomplished; he will keep you in exile no longer; but your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will punish; he will uncover your sins.

I. Torment exposes idols (Verses 1-10)

A. The idol of trusting in financial security (1)

1 Kings 6:20–22 (ESV) — 20 The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid an altar of cedar. **21** And Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold, and he drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold. **22** And he overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.

Deuteronomy 8:17–18 (ESV) — 17 Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ **18** You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

B. The idol of looking to people as savior (2)

Jeremiah 39:4–7 (ESV) — 4 When Zedekiah king of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled, going out of the city at night by way of the king's garden through the gate between the two walls; and they went toward the Arabah. **5** But the army of the Chaldeans pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. And when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, at Riblah, in the land of Hamath; and he passed sentence on him. **6** The king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah at Riblah before his eyes, and the king of Babylon slaughtered all the nobles of Judah. **7** He put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains to take him to Babylon.

C. The idol of comfort (3-4)

D. The idol of presuming on God's favor (6)

Ezekiel 16:46–51 (ESV) — 46 And your elder sister is Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. **47** Not only did you walk in their ways and do according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more

corrupt than they in all your ways. **48** As I live, declares the Lord GOD, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. **49** Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. **50** They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it. **51** Samaria has not committed half your sins. You have committed more abominations than they, and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the abominations that you have committed.

E. The idol of spiritual leaders (verses 7-8)

Daniel 9:5-6 (ESV) — 5 we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. **6** We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

Isaiah 30:9-10 (ESV) — 9 For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD; **10** who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions,

Jeremiah 38:4-6 (ESV) — 4 Then the officials said to the king, "Let this man be put to death, for he is weakening the hands of the soldiers who are left in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man is not seeking the welfare of this people, but their harm." **5** King Zedekiah said, "Behold, he is in your hands, for the king can do nothing against you." **6** So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern of Malchiah, the king's son, which was in the court of the guard, letting Jeremiah down by ropes. And there was no water in the cistern, but only mud, and Jeremiah sank in the mud.

F. The idol of a quick fix (9-10)

II. God is just in His rejection (Verses 11-16)

A. God's hot anger is displayed (11)

Lamentations 2:3-5 (ESV) — 3 He has cut down in fierce anger all the might of Israel; he has withdrawn from them his right hand in the face of the enemy; he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob, consuming all around. **4** He has bent his bow like an enemy, with his right hand set like a foe; and he has killed all who were delightful in our eyes in the tent of the daughter of Zion; he has poured out his fury like fire. **5** The Lord has become like an enemy; he has swallowed up Israel; he has swallowed up all its palaces; he has laid in ruins its strongholds, and he has multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

B. Nobody can believe it (12)

C. Vengeance is mine says the Lord (13-16)

Jeremiah 6:13-15 (ESV) — 13 "For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. **14** They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace. **15** Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown," says the LORD.

III. Beyond the help of idols (Verses 17-20)

A. The idol of trusting in another nation to help (17)

Isaiah 30:1-3 (ESV) — 1 "Ah, stubborn children," declares the LORD, "who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; **2** who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt! **3** Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation.

B. The idol of trusting in our ability to get away (18-19)

Isaiah 30:15-16 (ESV) — 15 For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength." But you were unwilling, **16** and you said, "No! We will flee upon horses"; therefore you shall flee away; and, "We will ride upon swift steeds"; therefore your pursuers shall be swift.

Amos 2:14-16 (ESV) — 14 Flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not retain his strength, nor shall the mighty save his life; **15** he who handles the bow shall not stand, and he who is swift of foot shall not save himself, nor shall he who rides the horse save his life; **16** and he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day," declares the LORD.

C. The idol in trusting in a leader above God (20)

IV. Zion versus Edom (Verses 21-22)

A. God will take care of Edom (21)

Obadiah 11–12 (ESV) — 11 On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. **12** But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin; do not boast in the day of distress.

Psalms 75:8 (ESV) — 8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.

Romans 12:19 (ESV) — 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

Jeremiah 9:25–26 (ESV) — 25 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh— **26** Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.”

B. God will again have mercy upon His people (22)

Jeremiah 29:10–14 (ESV) — 10 “For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. **11** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. **12** Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. **13** You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. **14** I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Jeremiah 49:10–12 (ESV) — 10 But I have stripped Esau bare; I have uncovered his hiding places, and he is not able to conceal himself. His children are destroyed, and his brothers, and his neighbors; and he is no more. **11** Leave your fatherless children; I will keep them alive; and let your widows trust in me.” **12** For thus says the LORD: “If those who did not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, will you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you must drink.