

Message #7

Lamentations 4:1-22

Last time, we saw a gracious invitation given by God to the people to examine themselves; admit their sin and confess their sin. Now that message had been presented by Jeremiah to these people before they were chastised and it was still being communicated to them after they had been chastised. It is obvious to this point they had not done that.

They had been taken to Babylon and were settling into a new life. We may recall that Jeremiah told them to hunker down there and build houses and expect to live there for a while (Jer. 29:5). These people still had not repented. They had still not turned to the Lord and acknowledged their sin.

So what I suspect Jeremiah is doing here in this chapter is once again reminding the people of what they saw God negatively do. He is reminding them how their world fell apart completely and the horrible things they experienced because they would not confess their sin and turn to the Lord.

Certainly Jeremiah's goal here is not just to recite depressing history; his goal is to get these people to come to terms with their sin and resolve it before God, so they once again could receive the blessings of God.

REGARDLESS OF ONE'S WEALTH OR SUCCESS OR PREVIOUS STATUS IN LIFE, ONE WHO HAS REBELLED AGAINST GOD AND HIS WORD WILL BE CHASTISED WITH MISERY AND DOOM AND THEY NEED TO CONFESS THEIR SIN AND RETURN TO THE LORD TO ESCAPE IT.

Because each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, we assume that each verse must be studied and is critical to the point Jeremiah is making. These verses reinforce Jeremiah's previous point that God's people need to examine themselves and deal with their sin. They still had not dealt with their own sin.

Jeremiah is once again reminding the people of God as to what happened. As time went on some of God's people in Babylon, who still were not right with God, had not faced their sin and confessed their sin. Some people apparently were forgetting how bad things were when they weren't right with God. So Jeremiah takes them on this trip down memory lane.

There are four specific areas of lamentation that God presents here:

LAMENTATION #1 – What God’s people became. 4:1-11

God describes what happened to His people.

Fact #1 - They once were pure and sacred but now they were dark and impure. **4:1 (Aleph)**

They were a pure gold that had become dark **(4:1) (Aleph)**. They were once sacred stones but they have all been poured out at every location and every street **(4:1)**. There was nothing sacred or pure about them anymore. This is why none of them were even left on any corner of the streets in Jerusalem.

Fact #2 - They once were precious and valuable and now they are earthy and worldly. **4:2 (Bet)**

What was once a precious, valuable people is now nothing more than an earthen jar.

Fact #3 - God’s people were so cruel that they had become worse than animals. **4:3 (Gimmel)**

God’s people had become cruel. They had become like animals. The women would not even nurse their babies.

Fact #4 - God’s people would not even feed hungry infants or children. **4:4 (Dalet)**

God’s judgment had affected young infants and little ones.

Fact #5 - God’s people who were once rich were now living in poverty. **4:5 (He)**

God’s judgment had affected the rich who ate delicacies. It affected those who wore purple as an elite rich. They were all starving to be fed and humiliated. God can give prosperity and He can take it away.

Fact #6 - God’s judgment was because of their iniquity and sin. **4:6 (Waw)**

God’s judgment was for the iniquity and sin of His own people. He had overthrown His own people like He did with Sodom and Gomorrah.

In fact, His judgment against His own people was worse than Sodom and Gomorrah, because He overthrew them in one moment; this judgment was dragging on.

Fact #7 - God’s people at one time had been beautiful. **4:7 (Zayin)**

God’s people were once consecrated and righteous and beautiful. They were a glorious reflection of a glorious God. But no more.

Fact #8 - God's people were now unrecognizable. **4:8 (Chet)**

God's people were dark, evil, depraved. They were not recognized as the people of God any more.

Fact #9 - God was letting His own people starve and be killed because of his anger. **4:9 (Tet)**

They were not flourishing as the blessed people of God. God was letting them starve and letting them be slain because of His anger and wrath. It would be better if God would have just let them be killed, but God didn't. These people, His people, were starving to death because of their refusal to face their sin and confess it and turn to the Lord.

Fact #10 - Things were so bad that women killed their own children. **4:10 (Yod)**

Things were so bad that some women killed their own children and boiled their own children and became cannibals. They considered that to be the compassionate thing to do rather than to watch their children starve.

Fact #11 - All of these horrible things were chastisements from God. **4:11 (Kaf)**

This was all due to the anger and wrath of God because the people would not face their sin, confess their sin and turn to Him. God had torn this nation down and tore it apart.

Fact #12 - The political leaders of the world did not believe what they had seen. **4:12 (Lamed)**

In fact, the political kings of the earth could not believe what God had done to Jerusalem. The entire world was talking about the bad things that had hit God's people and God's city.

This is what became of God's people. Jeremiah is trying to remind these people of what life had been like because of the anger of God. His goal was to get these people to confess their sin and turn to God.

LAMENTATION #2 – How God's people were misled. **4:13-16**

Jeremiah wanted the people to realize who it was that led them into this disaster. It was the godless, wicked religious leaders.

Misleading Agent #1 - They were misled by religious prophets. **4:13a (Mem)**

Those false prophets told the people they were right with God.

Misleading Agent #2 - They were misled by religious priests. **4:13b (Mem)**

The prophets and the priests were living sinful lives and they themselves didn't deal with their own sin. Their religious leaders had actually destroyed those who were righteous.

They were responsible for killing godly men who were telling the truth. According to **verse 14 (Nun)**, these phony religious leaders with their phony messages were now seen for what they were. They were blind guides who were defiled by the blood they were responsible for shedding.

According to **Verse 15 (Samech)**, they were no longer wanted by the people. They fled and no one wanted them even to live with them.

According to **Verse 16 (Pey)**, it was the Lord who had scattered them. It was the Lord who would not regard them. The leaders were no longer protected by God and they were not honored by the people.

The religious leaders had made a disaster of God's people by not communicating to them the truth that if you anger God, He will chastise and punish.

LAMENTATION #3 – The desperate hope and trust of the people did not work. **4:17-20**

Jeremiah reminds the people that we looked for help from other nations, but no one could save us. **The people were so desperate that they turned to everyone but the Lord.** They looked for help from any who would give it, but they couldn't give it (**v. 17**) (**Ayin**).

Egypt could not save them. Babylon had come in and the people realized we are judged and the end has come (**v. 18**) (**Tsade**). Jeremiah says don't you remember you were hunted down in the streets. We knew we had come to our end. We were not going to be delivered.

According to **verse 19 (Qof)**, Jeremiah says our pursuers moved in fast. Jeremiah says don't you remember what we went through. They chased us and ambushed us and we could not get away in the mountains or the wilderness.

Jeremiah says in **verse 20 (Resh)**, here we were the people of God, the anointed of God with God's life in us and we were taken down to their pits. We were the people who were supposed to be living under the shadow of God's blessings and are nothing.

LAMENTATION #4 – The punishment of all the people. **4:21-22**

Now some have said these verses are out of the context, but that cannot be because they are the last two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in this acrostic.

Esau and Jacob hated each other. The Edomites had a long feud with the Israelites ever since the days of Esau and Jacob.

Verse 21 (Sin/Shin) says that as the Edomites watched all of these negative things happening to Israel, they were happy. The Arabs were dancing in the streets.

Verse 22 (Tau) warns the Edomites that eventually when He is done pouring out His anger on the Israelites, God will come after them. Jeremiah warns people that even though God does judge His people, the rest of the world will also be judged.

At the time Jeremiah was writing this, Edom was rejoicing over what had happened to Israel. Jeremiah says, but your judgment is coming soon.