

THE PLIGHT THAT PROPELS A PLEA *continued*

[3] THE CURE SOUGHT THROUGH THIS LAMENTATION.

A question emerges in **2:13**; answered by **2:18-19**.

(a) THE SITUATION; 2:13: No city had been so highly privileged – therefore none fell so spectacularly and savagely.

(b) THE SOLUTION; 2:18-19: to cry to the Lord.

(i) THE CRY MUST BE STRONG; 2:18 – the only time in the entire book of Lamentations where the verb “cry out” occurs.

(ii) THE CRY MUST BE SINCERE; this is not play-acting or pretence.

(iii) THE CRY MUST BE SUSTAINED: The “apple” (or pupil) is the tenderest, most sensitive, part of the eye: the thought is that it cannot be spared but should be flowing with tears.

(iv) THE CRY MUST BE STRENGTHENED; 2:19: spreading our entire case before the Lord and throwing ourselves unreservedly upon Him. Lifting up the hands refers particularly to the palms of the hands, and is an action associated with prayers of entreaty (cf. **Psalm 63:4; 141:2**); it speaks of propelling the burden of our hearts to heaven. Zion does not plead past mercies or former achievements; she focuses on the mercy and pity of God. The horrific circumstances of the city call for urgent remedies from the only possible source of help, so that she responds to the invitation, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble” (**Psalm 50:15**). “Prayer is a salve for every sore, even the sorest, a remedy for every malady, even the most grievous. And our business in prayer is not to prescribe, but to subscribe to the wisdom and will of God; to refer our case to Him, and then to leave it with Him” (Matthew Henry).

MEETINGS TODAY



- Morning Worship – 11.30am:
5th Message in the Lamentations Series: “The Plight that Propels a Plea.”
- Evening Service – 7.00pm:
“Double Rest in Jesus Alone.”
Soloist – Hannah Simpson.



BOOKINGS FOR WW1 TOUR INCREASING

Our booking board is filling up fast! A further 18 tours have been booked by schools and other inquiries are being received on a regular basis. Friday night saw the visit of fellowships from Ballygowan and Carryduff, while a 35-strong contingent came from Comber FPC on Saturday evening.

One member of the latter group sent this message via Facebook: “I was part of the Comber tour tonight, and just wanted to offer my sincere thanks for such a great evening! ... The sheer level of hardwork, man hours and craftsmanship which you have put into the tour is amazing! Particularly interesting to hear about local people involved and their contribution. Thank you very much once again for a fun, informative evening with laughs but also remembering the sacrifice the brave men and women gave in defence of our nation. God bless you.”

Don't miss out – make sure to book in on the next Open Day.



THE PLIGHT THAT PROPELS A PLEA

Lamentations 2:10-22.

An Exhibition was held at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, from July-October 2017, featuring more than 90 rarely seen 'realist' paintings by British artists, each dating to the interwar period, the 1920s and 1930s. It was called 'True to Life.' As an eyewitness of the sufferings of Jerusalem, the pathos of the prophet Jeremiah reaches us in this section of Lamentations, so that we feel we too are gazing on this awful situation.

[1] THE CHARACTERS SUBJECT TO THIS LAMENTATION.

On every side the people were in agony and anguish, no one was exempt, including: **(a) THE MEN AT THE GATE.** First mentioned are "*the elders*" (**2:10**) – the judges and magistrates: from sitting on thrones of arbitration they now sit on the ground in humiliation; **(b) THE WOMEN ON THE GROUND.** "*The mention of the 'elders' and 'young women' is probably intended to include the whole surviving population*" (Ellison). No more music, but mourning, for them (cf. **Isaiah 3:16**); **(c) THE MAN OF GOD.** Jeremiah cannot continue with this neutral tone any longer; he bursts forth in emotional statements that underlines his involvement in what he is witnessing, esp. in **2:11**. "*He has wept till he can weep no more, has almost wept his eyes out, wept himself blind*" (Matthew Henry). Jeremiah can see nothing to compare with the tragedy that has overtaken Zion (**2:13**).

[2] THE CAUSES SPECIFIED BEHIND THIS LAMENTATION.

The prophet pinpoints five reasons behind the desolation of his beloved city and country. The fifth reason ties in each of the other four. First, there was **(a) STARVATION; 2:11-12.** Jeremiah saw children fall to the ground as if they had been shot through with an arrow as they staggered around the city, looking in vain

for scraps of food – a scene of hardship that was starkly played out literally, in "*the broad places*": not just along alleyways between buildings, but in the larger plazas and town squares. Mention is made of "corn" rather than bread, suggesting that even the basic, raw ingredients are unavailable. This situation is further described in **2:19-20**: children are "faint" – a reference to how they feel ready to die; some mothers are facing the awful prospect of cannibalism.

(b) SLAUGHTER; 2:11,20-22. Naturally, multitudes did survive the slaughter; however, the graphic point that is being made is that no one escaped entirely the effects of God's wrath. The streets and the sanctuary were full of bodies.

(c) SEDUCTION; 2:13-14. (cf. **2 Timothy 3:13**). The Jerusalem peace-prophets were engaged in a religious cover-up – a whitewash – of the judgment that was coming to their land and the reasons why it was on its way (cf. **Jeremiah 6:14; 14:13**). The central issue lies at the centre of **2:14**: "*... and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity ...*"

"Discovered" = "to remove / expose / go into exile" – which links with "captivity": lack of prophetic exposure through the Word had led to the exposure of the exile, the destruction of the city and the intense suffering and sorrow of those who remained. The key problem: there was no preaching on sin; no exposure of iniquity. cf. today with teaching of doctrine and morality.

(d) SCOFFING; 2:15-16: "*Jerusalem was the envy of the surrounding nations: they longed for its destruction, and rejoiced when it took place*" (Adam Clarke). Cf. Calvary, but the devil will not win (**Revelation 11:3-13**; cf. **Matthew 16:18**).

(e) SOVEREIGNTY; 2:17: The Babylonians caused an incredible level of destruction, but it was the case with them, as it was with Pilate with respect to Jesus (**John 19:11**) – they had no power unless given from above. "*They are but the sword in God's hand.*" The term "*fulfilled*" is taken from the language of weaving to describe the cutting off a piece of finished fabric – complete. What God has done is to carry out His Word (cf. **Jeremiah 18:11-12; Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Leviticus 26:14-45**). He will do this to the end (**Matthew 25:31-46**); this spells a curse for sinners, but blessing for the righteous (**Isaiah 40:8**, cf. **Isaiah 46:10-11; 2 Corinthians 1:20; Hebrews 13:8**).