

LAMENTATIONS 2

THE CLOUD OF GOD'S ANGER

The second of Jeremiah's dirges of lament is set to the same mournful tune with the former, and its theme is much the same. In this second elegy, the destruction of the city of Jerusalem is described; and it is specifically attributed to the hand of Jehovah, and not to the Babylonian army – for they were only the agents in the Lord's hand, who served His purposes of judgment. The chapter is divided into two main sections, and the wail becomes louder and sadder toward the close.

“Alas, the Lord in His anger hath covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud!” Such is the prophet's cry at the beginning of the first portion of this chapter (verses 1-10). Then there follows a description of the judgment – in which all earthly causes are almost lost sight of, in the recognition of the avenging hand of God Himself. “The Lord hath done it!” – that is the keynote of this part of the dirge. “Is there evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” (Amos 3:6) It is a sad characteristic of the skepticism of our age when we attribute the calamities of life to chance, accident, or human instrumentality; by doing so, we are effectually denying that God's hand is in them. But the recognition of that fact brings far more consolation than its denial can! It was not in complete despondency that the prophet, in the name of Jerusalem, uttered these doleful lamentations and acknowledged God in their afflictions. There was hope even in the night of gloom! Why? Because Jehovah Himself had visited His people with the rod! And therefore, there was great hope of finding forgiveness and mercy at His hands – if they would only learn the lesson that the rod was designed to teach, and return to Him Whose compassionate arms were already open and waiting to receive them back to Himself again! If the Babylonians had conquered the nation of Judah without the hand of Jehovah being involved, well might the prophet have despaired of ever finding relief from their afflictions! For these heathen kings and soldiers were not generally characterized as men from whom even repentant persons might expect to find mercy or forgiveness; in fact, they rather delighted in tormenting and terrorizing those unfortunate people who fell into their jaws. And often, when we are dealing with men and women who are sinful like ourselves, it seems that this same spirit of cruelty pervades all too frequently; forgiveness and mercy often continue to be withheld, even when repentance on the part of the wrongdoer is genuine and sincere. But when we are dealing with the Lord, it is quite a different story! There has never been a case when a humbled and repentant sinner has applied to Him for forgiveness and grace, and He has turned away His Fatherly face of love from

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Jeremiah acknowledges God's hand in the tragedies of Jerusalem – verses 1-12
- ❖ He laments the ineffectiveness of human comfort, and he grieves because of the scoffing and mockery of Jerusalem's enemies – verses 13-22

their earnest entreaties for pardon and favor. After transgressing against the Lord and being offered a choice as to which version of the chastening rod he wished to experience, King David was a wise man when he said, "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man!" (2 Sam. 24:14)



In the second part of this sorrowful poem (verses 13-22), the prophet laments the ineffectiveness and weakness of human comfort. And he also finds himself grieved because the enemies of Jerusalem were using this opportunity to scoff over her terrible misfortunes. "Is this the city that wore all the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?" they asked. The wicked always triumph over the fall of their enemies, especially when their enemies are the people of God; and the deeper their victims fall, the louder they gloat and triumph. Under such circumstances, it is to the Lord alone that we must turn; for it is usually a sad but true statement concerning those earthly companions whom we call our friends: when they are willing to help us, they are not able; and when they do find themselves able to help us, they are unwilling to do so. But our God is no such fickle friend! The Lord had indeed sent these judgments upon Jerusalem, but He alone could now give them comfort and relief! To Him, therefore, "their heart cried" (verse 18). It is the heart that God hears, and not merely the voice; and O how piteously it cries here! It appeals for mercy on behalf of the poor women, whose dire necessities compelled them to eat their own infants; and on behalf of the priests and the prophets, who were slain in the Temple of the Lord. All the terrible powers of Jehovah had come upon Judah – sword, pestilence, and famine – and no one could escape their terrors.

But the prophet takes the right course as he beholds these frightful scenes! Here we have a lesson teaching us when, how, and to Whom we ought to pray. Prayer must not cease, even in the direst trouble; but rather, it ought to increase as our sorrows multiply! Pouring out the heart before the Lord, and spreading all our sorrows before the mercy-seat – these are sure tokens of grace at work within the soul. It is a certain sign that our afflictions have worked the effect that the Lord intended them to work, when these trials lead our hearts back to God, and not away from Him; and when Jesus is still loved, and His grace and righteousness is still sought after and valued above all things. We must not look to saints, martyrs, or angels. He Who brings chastisements upon us is the only One Who can remove them. Therefore, it is to Him alone that we must bring our appeals, our tears, and our sighs – laying open before Him all the causes of our grief, that His pity and compassion may be aroused!

Lord, we pray that You would give us Your grace so that when You send Your chastisements upon us, they may lead our hearts closer to Yourself! Amen.