

LAMENTATIONS 4 “HOW IS THE GOLD BECOME DIM!”

In this chapter, the fate of the several different classes of Jerusalem’s population is described. The song begins with the same Hebrew word as chapters 1 and 2, meaning, “Alas, how!” Never was the desolation of a kingdom mourned over with more keen and heart-felt sorrow than that which was poured out over the terrible desolation of Zion. The prophet’s whole soul goes out in the most dejected state of lamentation. He takes notice of every possible object of distress that would be a proper cause of mourning. The inhabitants of Zion (verses 1-2) had formerly been so fine that they had been compared to the best gold, but the gold had now become dim; it had lost its luster and appeared tarnished. The people had been like the sacred stones of the Temple; but now it was as if they were scattered at the end of every street, and were being treated like common clay pots.

After contrasting Jerusalem’s former state of joy and beauty with her present dejection, Jeremiah describes the deplorable situation of misery, in all its aggravated circumstances, throughout the ruins of the city. The images are very strong. Those who had once been delicately fed were now desolate in the streets, and those who had been brought up in scarlet were now embracing heaps of filth. The princes – who had been purer than snow, whiter than milk, more ruddy than coral, and as brilliant as the sapphire – were now blacker than coal, and not even recognizable in the streets. Even the mothers of Jerusalem had treated their children with less affection than sea-monsters treat their young. Like the ostrich – which lays her eggs in the sand and leaves them (Job 39:13-18) – they had become cruel enough to forget their infants, so that they perished in the streets for hunger and thirst (verses 3-4). And the misery of the women themselves was even more horrible; for as they were dying of hunger, they consumed the flesh of their own children for food. Thus had the Lord poured out His fury to the utmost upon His once-holy city. In verses 13-20, this judgment upon Jerusalem is particularly described as directly arising from the sins of her priests and false prophets.

But amidst all of these strong descriptions of misery, let us take particular notice of the case of the Nazarites (verses 7-8). Because the whole order of Nazarites stood as pictures or foreshadows of Him Who was the One Great Nazarite, they demand our special attention. Everything that is said here of the purity of the Nazarite could only be truly said in relation to Jesus Christ. He – and He alone – is pure, holy, harmless, and undefiled. The Bride, or the Church, gave witness to this fact in the Song of Solomon (chapter 5:10), when she said, “My

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Jeremiah laments the deplorable situation of Jerusalem in ruins – verses 1-20
- ❖ He speaks a warning to the Edomites, and comfort to God’s people – verses 21-22

beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand!" Therefore, when these verses are read with Christ in mind, it will be understood that in Him, the Nazarites were purer than snow; but in their own sinful selves, they were blacker than coal.

In verses 21 and 22, the daughter of Edom is addressed as the special enemy of God's people at this time. From other Scripture passages (Ps. 137:7; Obad. 10-14), we know that the Edomites actually lent a hand to the Babylonian army as they wrecked the holy city. However, the prophet here says to them, "Rejoice as much as you please, but you shall not escape; for the cup of suffering shall pass over to you also, and you shall drink it." But Edom stands as a representative of all the enemies of Christ's Church. The enmity will always run between the children of God and the servants of Satan as long as the world continues (Gal. 4:29). Nevertheless, the hour of reckoning must come; and an awful one it will be, when all the enemies of Christ will be driven from the presence of God to everlasting destruction!

But what about Zion? "Her punishment has come to an end," the prophet declares, "and she will no more be led into captivity!" (verse 22) In the times of the Gospel, Jerusalem would find true atonement for her guilt; and then the daughter of Zion would be gathered into the fold of her tender Shepherd, and no longer scattered among the nations of the earth. Those times have come, and that prophecy is still being fulfilled. And far brighter days are yet to dawn upon God's people, for both Jews and Gentiles are being gathered into Christ's sheepfold; and together, they shall make one flock under one Shepherd (John 10:16).

As we behold the sad consequences of sin in the Lord's people of old, let us seriously consider where our own nation would stand, if the Lord were to enter into strict judgment with us. If He were to arise and visit our national offences with the rod, who could help trembling? O precious Jesus! We have gone far away in rebellions; and for profaneness, impiety, Sabbath-breaking, and transgression, our land mourns. Yet, dear Lord, turn to us; and turn our hearts to You, so that we may fear Your name! Come to us and bless us with awakening, converting, renewing, and confirming grace, so that our souls may be revived in the light of Your countenance!



Lord Jesus, we give You thanks for being our Good Shepherd, and for gathering together both Jews and Gentiles into one flock in Your sheepfold! We also beseech You to execute Your justice upon the unrepentant heathen who oppress and persecute Your Church. Hasten the day when Your people are finally and fully delivered from the hands of their cruel foes! Amen.