

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE LAMENTATIONS OF

JEREMIAH

It is evident that Jeremiah was the author of the Lamentations which bear his name. The book was not written till after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. May we be led to consider sin as the cause of all our calamities, and under trials exercise submission, repentance, faith, and prayer, with the hope of promised deliverance through God's mercy.

CHAPTER 1

The miserable state of Jerusalem, the just consequences of its sins. (1-11) Jerusalem represented as a captive female, lamenting, and seeking the mercy of God. (12-22)

 **Lamentations 1:1**

Vs. 1-11: The prophet sometimes speaks in his own person; at other times Jerusalem, as a distressed female, is the speaker, or some of the Jews. The description shows the miseries of the Jewish nation. Jerusalem became a captive and a slave, by reason of the greatness of her sins; and had no rest from suffering. If we allow sin, our greatest adversary, to have dominion over us, justly will other enemies also be suffered to have dominion. The people endured the extremities of famine and distress. In this sad condition Jerusalem acknowledged her sin, and entreated the Lord to look upon her case. This is the only way to make ourselves easy under our burdens; for it is the just anger of the Lord for man's transgressions, that has filled the earth with sorrows, lamentations, sickness, and death.

Lamentations 1:12

Vs. 12-22: Jerusalem, sitting dejected on the ground, calls on those that passed by, to consider whether her example did not concern them. Her outward sufferings were great, but her inward sufferings were harder to bear, through the sense of guilt. Sorrow for sin must be great sorrow, and must affect the soul. Here we see the evil of sin, and may take warning to flee from the wrath to come. Whatever may be learned from the sufferings of Jerusalem, far more may be learned from the sufferings of Christ. Does he not from the cross speak to every one of us? Does he not say, Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Let all our sorrows lead us to the cross of Christ, lead us to mark his example, and cheerfully to follow him.

CHAPTER 2

Lamentation for the misery of Jerusalem.

Lamentations 2:1

Vs. 1-9: A sad representation is here made of the state of God's church, of Jacob and Israel; but the notice seems mostly to refer to the hand of the Lord in their calamities. Yet God is not an enemy to his people, when he is angry with them and corrects them. And gates and bars stand in no stead when God withdraws his protection. It is just with God to cast down those by judgments, who debase themselves by sin; and to deprive those of the benefit and comfort of Sabbaths and ordinances, who have not duly valued nor observed them. What should they do with Bibles, who make no improvement of them? Those who misuse God's prophets, justly lose them. It becomes necessary, though painful, to turn the thoughts of the afflicted to the hand of God lifted up against them, and to their sins as the source of their miseries.

Lamentations 2:10

Vs. 10-22: Causes for lamentation are described. Multitudes perished by famine. Even little children were slain by their mother's hands, and eaten, according to the threatening, ⁽¹³⁵⁾Deuteronomy 28:53. Multitudes fell by the sword. Their false prophets deceived them. And their neighbors laughed at them. It is a great sin to jest at others' miseries, and adds much affliction to the afflicted. Their enemies triumphed over them. The enemies of the church are apt to take its shocks for its ruins; but they will find themselves deceived. Calls to lamentation are given; and comforts for the cure of these lamentations are sought. Prayer is a salve for every sore, even the sorest; a remedy for every malady, even the most grievous. Our business in prayer is to refer our case to the Lord, and leave it with him. His will be done. Let us fear God, and walk humbly before him, and take heed lest we fall.

CHAPTER 3

The faithful lament their calamities, and hope in God's mercies.

Lamentations 3:1

Vs. 1-20: The prophet relates the more gloomy and discouraging part of his experience, and how he found support and relief. In the time of his trial the Lord had become terrible to him. It was an affliction that was misery itself; for sin makes the cup of affliction a bitter cup. The struggle between unbelief and faith is often very severe. But the weakest believer is wrong, if he thinks that his strength and hope are perished from the Lord.

Lamentations 3:21

Vs. 21-36: Having stated his distress and temptation, the prophet shows how he was raised above it. Bad as things are, it is owing to the mercy of God that they are not worse. We should observe what makes for us, as well as what is against us. God's compassions fail not; of this we have fresh instances every morning. Portions on earth are perishing things, but God is a portion for ever. It is our duty, and will be our comfort and satisfaction, to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord. Afflictions do and will work very much for good: many have found it good to bear this yoke in their youth; it has made many humble and serious, and has weaned them from the world, who otherwise would have been proud and unruly. If tribulation work patience, that patience will work experience, and that experience a hope that makes not ashamed. Due thoughts of the evil of sin, and of our own sinfulness, will convince us that it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed. If we cannot say with unwavering voice, The Lord is my portion; may we not say, I desire to have Him for my portion and salvation, and in his word do I hope? Happy shall we be, if we learn to receive affliction as laid upon us by the hand of God.

Lamentations 3:37

Vs. 37-41: While there is life there is hope; and instead of complaining that things are bad, we should encourage ourselves with the hope they will be

better. We are sinful men, and what we complain of, is far less than our sins deserve. We should complain to God, and not of him. We are apt, in times of calamity, to reflect on other people's ways, and blame them; but our duty is to search and try our own ways, that we may turn from evil to God. Our hearts must go with our prayers. If inward impressions do not answer to outward expressions, we mock God, and deceive ourselves.

Lamentations 3:42

Vs. 42-54: The more the prophet looked on the desolations, the more he was grieved. Here is one word of comfort. While they continued weeping, they continued waiting; and neither did nor would expect relief and succor from any but the Lord.

Lamentations 3:55

Vs. 55-66: Faith comes off conqueror, for in these verses the prophet concludes with some comfort. Prayer is the breath of the new man, drawing in the air of mercy in petitions, and returning it in praises; it proves and maintains the spiritual life. He silenced their fears, and quieted their spirits. Thou saidst, Fear not. This was the language of God's grace, by the witness of his Spirit with their spirits. And what are all our sorrows, compared with those of the Redeemer? He will deliver his people from every trouble, and revive his church from every persecution. He will save believers with everlasting salvation, while his enemies perish with everlasting destruction.

CHAPTER 4

The deplorable state of the nation is contrasted with its ancient prosperity.

Lamentations 4:1

Vs. 1-12: What a change is here! Sin tarnishes the beauty of the most exalted powers and the most excellencies gifts; but that gold, tried in the fire, which Christ bestows, never will be taken from us; its outward appearance may be dimmed, but its real value can never be changed. The horrors of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem are again described. Beholding the sad consequences of sin in the church of old, let us seriously consider to what the same causes may justly bring down the church now. But, Lord, though we have gone from thee in rebellion, yet turn to us, and turn our hearts to thee, that we may fear thy name. Come to us, bless us with awakening, converting, renewing, confirming grace.

Lamentations 4:13

Vs. 13-20: Nothing ripens a people more for ruin, nor fills the measure faster, than the sins of priests and prophets. The king himself cannot escape, for Divine vengeance pursues him. Our anointed King alone is the life of our souls; we may safely live under his shadow, and rejoice in Him in the midst of our enemies, for He is the true God and eternal life.

Lamentations 4:21

Vs. 21, 22: Here it is foretold that an end should be put to Zion's troubles. Not the fullness of punishment deserved, but of what God has determined to inflict. An end shall be put to Edom's triumphs. All the troubles of the church and of the believer will soon be accomplished. And the doom of their enemies approaches. The Lord will bring their sins to light, and they shall lie down in eternal sorrow. Edom here represents all the enemies of the church. And the corruption, and sin of Israel, which the prophet has proved to be universal, justifies the judgments of the Lord. It shows the need of that grace in Christ Jesus, which the sin and corruption of all mankind make so necessary.

CHAPTER 5

The Jewish nation supplicating the Divine favor.

Lamentations 5:1

Vs. 1-16: Is any afflicted? Let him pray; and let him in prayer pour out his complaint to God. The people of God do so here; they complain not of evils feared, but of evils felt. If penitent and patient under what we suffer for the sins of our fathers, we may expect that He who punishes, will return in mercy to us. They acknowledge, Woe unto us that we have sinned! All our woes are owing to our own sin and folly. Though our sins and God's just displeasure cause our sufferings, we may hope in his pardoning mercy, his sanctifying grace, and his kind providence. But the sins of a man's whole life will be punished with vengeance at last, unless he obtains an interest in Him who bare our sins in his own body on the tree.

Lamentations 5:17

Vs. 17-22: The people of God express deep concern for the ruins of the temple, more than for any other of their calamities. But whatever changes there are on earth, God is still the same, and remains for ever wise and holy, just and good; with Him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. They earnestly pray to God for mercy and grace; Turn us to thee, O Lord. God never leaves any till they first leave him; if he turns them to him in a way of duty, no doubt he will quickly return to them in a way of mercy. If God by his grace renew our hearts, he will by his favor renew our days. Troubles may cause our hearts to be faint, and our eyes to be dim, but the way to the mercy-seat of our reconciled God is open. Let us, in all our trials, put our whole trust and confidence in his mercy; let us confess our sins, and pour out our hearts before him. Let us watch against repinings and despondency; for we surely know, that it shall be well in the end with all that trust in, fear, love, and serve the Lord. Are not the Lord's judgments in the earth the same as in Jeremiah's days? Let Zion then be remembered by us in our prayers, and her welfare be sought above every earthly joy. Spare, Lord, spare thy people, and give not thine heritage to reproach, for the heathen to rule over them.