

NOTES ON THE PROPHECY AND LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

“The Weeping Prophet”

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE DAY OF THE LORD’S ANGER

(Lamentations 2)

It is the city of Jerusalem in a very particular sense that is under contemplation in this chapter. That city, once famed as the dwelling-place of the great King, was now a waste of blackened ruins. Throughout, it is recognized that not an enemy from the outside acting of his own volition, but the Lord Himself, who had so long dwelt in the midst of the city, had devoted it to destruction.

This the very first verse brings out.

“How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not His footstool in the day of His anger!”

It was sorrowful to contemplate that the city once called “the holy” should have become so vile and apostate that the Lord could no longer endure it. It is noticeable, however, that the beauty of Israel is **“cast down from heaven to earth;”** not “to hell” (sheol, or hades, the place of the dead), as in the case of privileged Capernaum (Matthew 11:23). There, the Lord Jesus had done many mighty works, and given a testimony beyond anything enjoyed by Jerusalem of old. But He and His words had been utterly rejected. Therefore Capernaum, **“exalted to heaven,”** should be **“brought down to hell.”** Its day was over forever.

Not so was it with Jerusalem. **“Cast down to earth,”** treated like a city of the nations; yea, trodden down of the Gentiles; still it is destined yet to occupy a place of glory such as it never knew in the past. It must be disciplined by adversity, but was not forsaken in perpetuity.

In His indignation against idolatry, the Lord had **“swallowed up all the habitation of Jacob,”** not pitying, because of the hardness of their heart. He had **“thrown down in His wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah,”** bringing them down to the ground and polluting the kingdom and princes. It was all because of sin. He loved them truly, but could not permit them to go in peace while in so dreadful a moral state. Therefore had He, **“in His fierce anger,”** cut off the horn of Israel, and caused their right arms to fail before the enemy (vers. 2, 3).

Three times in verses 4 and 5 He is said to have acted as though He were their enemy.

- First, we read, **“He hath bent His bow like an enemy.”**
- Second, **“He stood with His right hand as an adversary;”**
- Third, **“The Lord was as an enemy.”**

But it is well to notice the qualifying expressions **“like”** and **“as.”**

An enemy He never was; though their conduct compelled Him to act as if He were. How many a Christian has had to know Him in a similar way! How often has He seemed to become an enemy! But faith looks beyond all that the eye can see, and knows that He is unchanged in His love and tenderness.

It is sin in His children that has broken in on the fellowship He delights to have them enjoy. He is **“of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;”** and while He will never give up one of His redeemed, He will not countenance looseness of walk and an unbridled tongue in any, simply because He has saved them. In fact, it is just the contrary, for **“whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”**

This was the lesson the remnant of Judah had to learn; bitter as it must have been. In verse 6, **“tabernacle”** should be as in the margin, *“hedge.”* By turning to Psalm 80, we find the same metaphor employed. Israel is likened to vine brought out of Egypt and planted in a land from which the heathen had been cast out. Hedged in and tended by the divine Husbandman, it should have borne fruit for Himself, but we know His verdict (Isaiah 5:1-7): **“It brought forth wild grapes.”**

Because of this He allows it to be overrun by the heathen, as we read in Psalm 80:12-16: **“Why hast Thou broken down our hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech Thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which Thy right hand hath planted, and the branch which Thou madest strong for Thyself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down; they perish at the rebuke of Thy countenance.”**

It is the same thought that we have expressed here: the enclosure which in the past had separated the garden of the Lord from the Gentiles around was broken down by the Lord Himself, and **“the places of the assembly”** destroyed, so that the solemn feasts and sabbaths had been caused to cease in Zion. His altar He had cast off, and abhorred His sanctuary; permitting the unclean to pollute it, because of the unfaithfulness of His people. The walls of the city, with the gates and bars, were leveled to the ground; the king and princes were captive among the Gentiles; the very law (so long despised) was no more; and the prophets (to whom the deaf ear had been turned for years) had no vision from the Lord. Zion’s elders were girded in sackcloth, and sat upon the ground with dust upon their heads in speechless grief as they beheld the desolations on every hand (vers. 7-10). It was complete and overwhelming ruin, brought about by the Lord because they had neglected His Word and followed in the ways of the heathen.

In deep-toned notes of woe Jeremiah cries: **“Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city. They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine? when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers’ bosom”** (vers. 11, 12).

Only in fellowship with God do His people find peace and plenty. Away from Him unrest and famine must result. Is not this the reason why there are so many swooning babes and fainting children among the assemblies of God’s saints to-day? Surely it is time to consider our ways and turn again to the Lord. Something is radically wrong when the gathering of believers is not a nursery where babes in Christ receive needed nourishment, and help for their upbuilding and establishment in the things of God. When it is otherwise, it augurs a fallen state and testimony.

Zion had been overwhelmed as by the waves of the sea, so that there was no healing of her breach, humanly speaking (ver. 13). Her prophets had seen vain and foolish things for her (as in the case of Hananiah, recorded in chap. 28), prophesying smooth things, but not discovering her iniquity. True peace there could not be with unjudged sin upon her (ver. 14). Thus Jerusalem had become the sport of the passer-by, who scornfully asked, **“Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?”** (ver. 15). Both these titles are found applied to it in the Psalms: the former in Psalm 50:2; the latter in Psalm 48:2.

Her enemies exulted in her ruin, and gloried in having **“swallowed her up.”** This they had long desired, and now attributed it to their own prowess, not knowing of the Lord’s controversy with her (ver. 16). It was not the might of their arms that had caused them to triumph over her. Her offended Lord had but done that which He had devised, and fulfilled His Word given in the days of Moses (ver. 17). To Him, therefore, the remnant turns, crying out in the bitterness of their souls and giving themselves no rest day nor night, but incessantly lifting up their hands toward Him for the life of their fainting children (vers. 18, 19). This was as it should be, and argued a returning in heart to their God. The last three verses (20-22) form a prayer, and set forth their pitiable condition **“in the day of the Lord’s anger.”** He had said, **“Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.”** To Him, therefore, they turn, bewailing their wretchedness, the result of their own evil ways, and beseeching His favor. They shall yet prove that His ear is not dull of hearing, neither is His eye blinded to their misery.

~ end of chapter 28 ~

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