



# New Every Mourning

The Lamentations of Jeremiah  
Chapter Four

## "God is nowhere"

My dad tried to warn me that, if I kept doing drugs, I would wake up one day homeless, destitute, and diseased. I never believed him. Thankfully The Lord intervened in my life before I got to that point.

Our Heavenly Father warned His chosen nation, Israel, that if they did not obey His statutes, and if they persisted in disobedience, they would wake up one day homeless, destitute, and diseased.

God made a covenant with Israel, giving them His statutes, about 1406BC. He struggled with their disobedience for the greater part of 800 years. In 586BC their sins finally caught up to them as the Chaldean army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon broke through the gates, burned the city, destroyed the Temple, and took captive those they did not kill.

God said this, and Israel (as a nation) agreed, in 1406BC.

Leviticus 26:14 'But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments,

Leviticus 26:15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant,  
Leviticus 26:16 I also will do this to you...

A long list of terrible consequences follows, including this:

Leviticus 26:29 You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.

They would do this, out of necessity, because they were being besieged by their enemies.

Going forward 800 years we read,

Lamentations 4:10 The hands of the compassionate women  
Have cooked their own children; They became food for them In  
the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Cannibalism; probably necro-cannibalism, which is eating human flesh after someone has died rather than murdering them.

I'll bet no Israelite ever thought it could possibly come to that.

**Why do we not heed God's warnings?** That's the sub-theme tonight as we work through another terrifying chapter in Lamentations.

Lamentations 4:1 How the gold has become dim! How changed the fine gold! The stones of the sanctuary are scattered At the head of every street.

Lamentations 4:2 The precious sons of Zion, Valuable as fine gold, How they are regarded as clay pots, The work of the hands of the potter!

Solomon's once glorious Temple was scattered all over the city. As beautiful, as extravagant, as the Temple had been, God looked upon His people as far more beautiful and valuable. They - you - are the "pearl of great price" on this earth.

Shifting illustrations, God reminds them He was the Potter and nations are the clay. In the famous passage in Jeremiah we learn God molds a nation according to their obedience or disobedience.

Listen: Whenever you hear or read about God being the Potter and men being the clay, remember He was talking about Himself in relation to the nations of the world and the key factor was their response to His grace.

Lamentations 4:3 Even the jackals present their breasts To nurse their young; But the daughter of my people is cruel, Like ostriches in the wilderness.

Lamentations 4:4 The tongue of the infant clings To the roof of its mouth for thirst; The young children ask for bread, But no one breaks it for them.

Because of the siege, which was nearly three years long, the parents could not properly care for their children.

Before you blame God for the suffering of innocent children remember He warned them 800 years earlier what could and would happen as the consequences of **their** decisions.

Sometimes people bring things on themselves, only to wonder why God is allowing it. In a word: Consequences.

Lamentations 4:5 Those who ate delicacies Are desolate in the streets; Those who were brought up in scarlet Embrace ash heaps.

Lamentations 4:6 The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people Is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, Which was overthrown in a moment, With no hand to help her!

Lamentations 4:7 Her Nazirites were brighter than snow And whiter than milk; They were more ruddy in body than rubies, Like sapphire in their appearance.

Lamentations 4:8 Now their appearance is blacker than soot; They go unrecognized in the streets; Their skin clings to their bones, It has become as dry as wood.

Lamentations 4:9 Those slain by the sword are better off Than those who die of hunger; For these pine away, Stricken for lack of the fruits of the field.

FYI - you never want to be compared to Sodom, and you certainly don't want to be worse off than Sodom.

These verses point to the protracted nature of the suffering. You know, it is sometimes better for something to happen quickly and it be over and done than it be protracted over a long period of time.

Lamentations 4:10 The hands of the compassionate women Have cooked their own children; They became food for them In the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Lamentations 4:11 The LORD has fulfilled His fury, He has poured out His fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion, And it has devoured its foundations.

These two verses should be read together. It's a comparison. Just like "the hands of the compassionate women" were forced by necessity to cook "their own children," so God was forced by necessity to "kindle a fire in Zion" that "devoured" it and its people.

Lamentations 4:12 The kings of the earth, And all inhabitants of the world, Would not have believed That the adversary and the enemy Could enter the gates of Jerusalem -

Lamentations 4:13 Because of the sins of her prophets And the iniquities of her priests, Who shed in her midst The blood of the just.

Lamentations 4:14 They wandered blind in the streets; They have defiled themselves with blood, So that no one would touch their garments.

Lamentations 4:15 They cried out to them, "Go away, unclean! Go away, go away, Do not touch us!" When they fled and wandered, Those among the nations said, "They shall no longer dwell here."

Lamentations 4:16 The face of the LORD scattered them; He no longer regards them. The people do not respect the priests Nor show favor to the elders.

Surrounding nations were astonished that Jerusalem could fall. What they did not understand is that God's people were indestructible unless and until they disobeyed Him, bringing judgment upon themselves.

God wasn't just powerful; He was - and is - holy, and His people must therefore remain set apart from the sinful practices of this fallen world.

Israel could never be destroyed from without, by an enemy, unless she destroyed herself from within.

Lamentations 4:17 Still our eyes failed us, Watching vainly for our help; In our watching we watched For a nation that could not save us.

I wish I could capture the sadness of this verse. The Jews, in their distress, looked for another nation to come to their aid and defense. They especially looked to Egypt; but the Babylonians defeated Egypt at Carchemish.

All the while they had God to save them and all they needed to do was turn to Him in repentance.

Lamentations 4:18 They tracked our steps So that we could not walk in our streets. Our end was near; Our days were over, For our end had come.

Lamentations 4:19 Our pursuers were swifter Than the eagles of the heavens. They pursued us on the mountains And lay in wait for us in the wilderness.

Once the gates fell, there was no place to hide from the enemy.

Lamentations 4:20 The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD, Was caught in their pits, Of whom we said, "Under his shadow We shall live among the nations."

This refers to Zedekiah, appointed to govern Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. If he had followed Jeremiah's godly counsel and surrendered the city would have been spared. Instead he led the nation into its ruin.

Lamentations 4:21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, You who dwell in the land of Uz! The cup shall also pass over to you And you shall become drunk and make yourself naked.

Lamentations 4:22 The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; He will no longer send you into captivity. He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will uncover your sins!

History records the Edomites aiding the Babylonians at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. These verses tell them that a reckoning was coming. God sits in judgment over all nations with regard to their treatment of His people.

Look at the title of this study. How do you read it?

- Is it God is nowhere?
- Is it God is now here?

It's a famous wordplay; Ray Comfort uses it on Gospel tracts.

If you were in Jerusalem, cooking your dead children, you could think God is nowhere; or you could understand, God is now here - as He said, in judgment for our sins.

It won't work in every situation but, a lot of the time, when there is suffering and tragedy, people accuse God of being nowhere.

Truth is, He is there - now here, as it were. Not always in judgment - although many times a person really is reaping what they have sown.

He is also there in compassion, with mercy, offering salvation.

