

The Day of the Lord's Anger (Lamentations 2)

Background

Lamentations contains five related laments about the fall of Jerusalem in 586BC. In chapter 1, Jerusalem weeps with no one to comfort her. In chapter 2, Jeremiah describes God's anger.

Questions

In verses 1-9 Jeremiah describes God's actions.

- Who used to protect God's people? Who became their enemy? What happened to the Jerusalem's palaces, strongholds and temple? What has happened to her king, her princes, the Law and the prophets?

In verses 10-17 Jeremiah considers the effect of God's actions on various groups of people.

- What do the elders and the young women do? What do the infants do and what is the result? What do the passers-by do?

Jeremiah tries to compare the devastation of Jerusalem to a similar event but he cannot. All he can do is to compare her ruin to the vastness of the sea (v13)

In verse 18-22 Jerusalem, encouraged by Jeremiah, cries out to God

- What does Jerusalem want God to do? What hope is there for her?

The chapter ends as it began, reflecting on the day of God's anger.

- Did God purposely bring this terrible destruction upon Jerusalem? Or was it an accident? Or was it outside his control? Look particularly at verses 8 and 17. Will God ever act with such anger again?

Application

We should not minimise the fierceness of God's anger. We should rejoice that, through faith in Jesus, we will be delivered from that wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10). We should urge others to flee to him.

The Structure of Hebrew Poetry

Hebrew Poetry is written in lines rather than sentences. Each line usually consists of two or three related sub-lines (known as cola).¹

For example, Lam 2:1 contains three lines, each consisting of two sub-lines:

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|---------|---|
| Line 1: | How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion
with a cloud in his anger! |
| Line 2: | He cast down from heaven to earth
the beauty of Israel, |
| Line 3: | and he did not remember his footstool
in the day of his anger. |

Sub-lines can be related to each other in any way but the most common relationships are as follows:

- **Synonymous:** the thought of one sub-line is emphasised by a repeated thought in the next:

The One enthroned in heaven laughs
The Lord scoffs at them (Psalm 2:4)

- **Contrastive:** the thought of one sub-line is emphasised by a contrasting thought in the next:

For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous
but the way of the wicked will perish (Psalm 1:6)

- **Developmental:** the thought of one sub-line is explained or further developed by the next.

Praise be to the Lord
for he showed his wonderful love to me (Psalm 31:21)

- **Illustrative:** the thought of one sub-line is illustrated by the next:

O Sovereign Lord, my strong deliverer,
who shields my head in the day of battle (Psalm 140:7)

Whatever their relationship, sub-lines are meant to be considered together.

¹ These notes have been adapted from J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005)