

The Great Reversal (Lamentations 4v1-22)

Background

Lamentations contains five related laments about the fall of Jerusalem in 586BC. In chapters 1 to 3, Jeremiah's tears flow as he describes the sorrow of Jerusalem and the fierceness of God's anger. In chapter 4, he continues to mourn.

Questions

In verses 1-16, Jeremiah describes Jerusalem's condition as if he is walking through the streets recording what he sees.

- > What has happened to the splendour of the city (1); the sons of Zion (2-4); the prosperous (5); the princes (7-9); the daughters of Zion (10); the prophets, priests and elders (13-16)? What was the cause of this great reversal (6, 11)?

In verses 17-20, Jeremiah describes the failure of the people's hopes:

- > Who, in particular, tried to escape from Jerusalem? What happened to him (Jer 39)? How does this compare with prophecies about the Lord's anointed?

Jeremiah knows that Jerusalem will not remain in this desperate situation. In verses 21-22, he ironically calls on Edom to rejoice.

- > What does he say will happen to Edom? What does he say will happen to Jerusalem?

All of Israel's earthly kings pointed forward to the Messiah. The Messiah is *the* anointed of the Lord. He is "the breath of our nostrils", the one who gives us life. He was taken into the pit, the realm of the dead. But now he has risen from the dead and he is seated on the throne (as foretold in Psalm 2).

Application

During Jeremiah's day, God's people experienced a reversal of fortunes but there was a greater reversal to come. Jesus suffered to bring glory to his people. We should live in the hope of that glory (Romans 12v12).

Lamentations 4v1-22

¹How the gold has become dim!
How changed the fine gold!
The stones of the sanctuary are scattered
At the head of every street...
¹¹The Lord has fulfilled His fury,
He has poured out His fierce anger.
He kindled a fire in Zion,
And it has devoured its foundations...

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

¹⁹Our pursuers were swifter
Than the eagles of the heavens.
They pursued us on the mountains
And lay in wait for us in the wilderness.
²⁰The breath of our nostrils, the anointed¹ of the Lord,
Was caught in their pits,
Of whom we said, "Under his shadow
We shall live among the nations."

²¹Rejoice 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.
²²The 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!

¹ The Hebrew word for "anointed" is מָשִׁיחַ (masiah) from which we get the word Messiah.