

# ***Lamentations***

## **Chapter 2**

How the Lord has covered the Daughter of Zion with the cloud of his anger! He has hurled down the splendor of Israel from heaven to earth; he has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger. <sup>2</sup> Without pity the Lord has swallowed up all the dwellings of Jacob; in his wrath he has torn down the strongholds of the Daughter of Judah. He has brought her kingdom and its princes down to the ground in dishonor. <sup>3</sup> In fierce anger he has cut off every horn of Israel. He has withdrawn his right hand at the approach of the enemy. He has burned in Jacob like a flaming fire that consumes everything around it. <sup>4</sup> Like an enemy he has strung his bow; his right hand is ready. Like a foe he has slain all who were pleasing to the eye; he has poured out his wrath like fire on the tent of the Daughter of Zion. <sup>5</sup> The Lord is like an enemy; he has swallowed up Israel. He has swallowed up all her palaces and destroyed her strongholds. He has multiplied mourning and lamentation for the Daughter of Judah. <sup>6</sup> He has laid waste his dwelling like a garden; he has destroyed his place of meeting. The LORD has made Zion forget her appointed feasts and her Sabbaths; in his fierce anger he has spurned both king and priest. <sup>7</sup> The Lord has rejected his altar and abandoned his sanctuary. He has handed over to the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have raised a shout in the house of the LORD as on the day of an appointed feast. <sup>8</sup> The LORD determined to tear down the wall around the Daughter of Zion. He stretched out a measuring line and did not withhold his hand from destroying. He made ramparts and walls lament; together they wasted away. <sup>9</sup> Her gates have sunk into the ground; their bars he has broken and destroyed. Her king and her princes are exiled among the nations, the law is no more, and her prophets no longer find visions from the LORD. <sup>10</sup> The elders of the Daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have sprinkled dust on their heads and put on sackcloth. The young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground. <sup>11</sup> My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within, my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city. <sup>12</sup> They say to their mothers, "Where is bread and wine?" as they faint like wounded men in the streets of the city, as their lives ebb away in their mothers' arms. <sup>13</sup> What can I say for you? With what can I compare you, O Daughter of Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, O Virgin Daughter of Zion? Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you? <sup>14</sup> The visions of your prophets were false and worthless; they did not expose your sin to ward off your captivity. The oracles they gave you were false and misleading. <sup>15</sup> All who pass your way clap their hands at you; they scoff and shake their heads at the Daughter of Jerusalem: "Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?" <sup>16</sup> All your enemies open their mouths wide against you; they scoff and gnash their teeth and say, "We have swallowed her up. This is the day we have waited for; we have lived to see it." <sup>17</sup> The LORD has done what he planned; he has fulfilled his word, which he decreed long ago. He has

overthrown you without pity, he has let the enemy gloat over you, he has exalted the horn of your foes. <sup>18</sup> The hearts of the people cry out to the Lord. O wall of the Daughter of Zion, let your tears flow like a river day and night; give yourself no relief, your eyes no rest. <sup>19</sup> Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street. <sup>20</sup> “Look, O LORD, and consider: Whom have you ever treated like this? Should women eat their offspring, the children they have cared for? Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? <sup>21</sup> “Young and old lie together in the dust of the streets; my young men and maidens have fallen by the sword. You have slain them in the day of your anger; you have slaughtered them without pity. <sup>22</sup> “As you summon to a feast day, so you summoned against me terrors on every side. In the day of the LORD’s anger no one escaped or survived; those I cared for and reared, my enemy has destroyed.”

**Ch 2** In His righteous anger, God did not spare even His temple. The poet cannot exonerate Israel from guilt. Because it is the Lord who “has thrown down without pity,” relief must come from Him. Fervent, incessant prayer alone offers hope (vv 17–19). Responding to this exhortation, the daughter of Zion again appears on the stage to plead for the Lord’s mercy. (TLSB)

**2:1** “How ... !” See **note** on 1:1. (CSB)

*Daughter of Zion.* See 1:6 and **note**. (CSB)

*set ... under a cloud!* Rare expression, likely describing how the Lord’s wrath has shrouded Jerusalem, hazy with the dust and smoke of destruction. (TLSB)

*hurled down the splendor of Israel.* The imagery is that of a falling star (as in Isa 14:12). (CSB)

This was the glory of the capital itself, chosen by God, as it had been, for the seat of His glory and power in the midst of His people had been established there. (Kretzmann)

*footstool.* Either (1) the ark of the covenant (see 1Ch 28:2) or, more likely, (2) Mount Zion (see Ps 99:5, 9). (CSB)

This is the very Ark of the Covenant, 1 Chron. 28, 2, where Jehovah was enthroned between the wings of the cherubim, was removed and destroyed. (Kretzmann)

**2:2** *swallowed up all the dwellings.* See v. 5. (CSB)

The Lord fights against His own people. (TLSB)

*Daughter of Judah.* See **note** on 1:15. (CSB)

**2:3** *cut off every horn.* See Jer 48:25. (CSB)

*flaming fire that consumes.* See Nu 11:3; Job 1:16; Ps 106:18. (CSB)

God broke the strength and majesty in the heat of His indignation. (Kretzmann)

The Lord was directly active in its destruction. (Kretzmann)

WITHDRAWN...RIGHT HAND – God withdrew His assistance from His people and thus delivering them into the power of the invaders. (Kretzmann)

**2:4** *strung his bow.* See Dt 32:42; Ps 7:12–13; Zec 9:13–14. (CSB)

*poured out his wrath.* See Ps 69:24; 79:6; Jer 6:11; 7:20; 10:25; 42:18; 44:6; Hos 5:10; Zep 3:8. (CSB)

This was done in the capture and destruction of the city. (Kretzmann)

THE TENT – This is Israel personified who once resided in Jerusalem (he tent). (TL SB)

**2:5** *palaces ... strongholds.* See Hos 8:14. (CSB)

This would include the fine dwellings of the rich and mighty and all the fortified places throughout the country. (Kretzmann)

*He has multiplied ... Daughter of Judah.* The Sumerian “Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur” offers this parallel: “In the desolate city there was uttered nothing but laments and dirges” (lines 361–362, 486–487). (CSB)

This would be sorrow and sadness, mourning and misery. (Kretzmann)

*Daughter of Judah.* See **note** on 1:15. (CSB)

**2:6** *his dwelling.* Originally the tabernacle, later the temple (see Ps 27:4–5). (CSB)

ESV has “Booth.” In the storm of God’s wrath, the massive structure of Israel’s temple disintegrated as if it were a flimsy hut made of leaves and branches. (TL SB)

*like a garden.* Cf. Isa 5:5–6; Jer 5:10; 12:10. (CSB)

The Temple being subjected to ruin like a garden which the owner converts into some other kind of plot if it no longer suits his purposes. (Kretzmann)

*his place of meeting.* The tabernacle/temple, where God met with his people (see Ex 25:22; 29:42–43; Ps 74:4). (CSB)

He no longer desired these mediators of His covenant (kings and priests), and the service of the priests was no longer required when the Temple-worship ceased. (Kretzmann)

**2:7** *rejected ... abandoned.* These two verbs are found in Ps 89:38–39 (“rejected ... renounced”) in connection with the Lord’s forsaking of the king from the dynasty of David. (CSB)

God rejected it with disdain, chiefly on account of the hypocritical worship connected with it. (Kretzmann)

*raised a shout in the house of the LORD.* See Ps 74:4. (CSB)

This was the raucous cries of invaders to replace the joyful shouts of worshipers. (TLSB)

*as on the day of an appointed feast.* See Hos 12:9. (CSB)

**2:8** *determined to tear down.* See Jer 32:31. (CSB)

This was the destruction of Jerusalem setting into execution the judgment of God, 2 Kings 25, 10. (Kretzmann)

*Daughter of Zion.* A personification of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. (CSB)

*stretched out a measuring line.* To destroy with the same standards of precision and propriety used in building (see Isa 28:17 and **note**; Am 7:7–8 and **notes**). (CSB)

Demolition of the city walls was carried out with the same precision the builders used in erecting them (Is 34:11). (TLSB)

*ramparts ... walls.* See Isa 26:1. The ramparts were the outer fortifications (see 2Sa 20:15). (CSB)

**2:9** **GATES HAVE SUNK** – They were buried under a mass of rubbish and earth, which the destruction of the city has scattered over them. (Kretzmann)

**LAW IS NO MORE** – The proclamation of God’s Word was ended. (TLSB)

*prophets no longer find visions.* The Lord was no longer communicating to his people through prophets (see Ps 74:9; Am 8:11 and **note**; Mic 3:7). (CSB)

After Jeremiah was carried away into Egypt (Jeremiah 43), no prophetic voice was heard in the region of Israel for decades. (TLSB)

**2:10** *elders*. See **note** on Ex 3:16. (CSB)

This would be the leaders of the Jewish Church. (Kretzmann)

*... sit on the ground in silence ... sprinkled dust on their heads and put on sackcloth ... bowed their heads*. Signs of mourning (see Job 2:12–13; Ps 35:13–14). (CSB)

Ambr: “Jeremiah knew that penitence was a great remedy, which he in his Lamentations took up for Jerusalem... Here you recognize the intention of the soul, the faithfulness of the mind, the disposition of the body” (NPNF 2 10:351). (TLSB)

They have no counsel to give, chiefly because they are dumb with grief. Such is the effect when the Lord carries out His sentence of judgment upon nations and upon individuals who oppose His will. (Kretzmann)

*young women of Jerusalem*. See 1:4 and **note**. (CSB)

These were ordinarily care-free and happy. (Kretzmann)

**2:11** *My eyes fail*. See **note** on Ps 6:7. (CSB)

They were spent, worn out, with weeping. (Kretzmann)

*weeping*. See **note** on 1:16. (CSB)

*I am in torment within*. Repeated from 1:20. (CSB)

HEART...POURED OUT ON THE GROUND – Since the heart was considered the seat of the passions, - all my feelings are dissolved with pain. (Kretzmann)

ESV has “bile is poured out.” It is vomiting that ends in dry heaves. (TLSB)

*my people*. Lit. “the daughter of my people” (see 3:48; 4:10; see also **note** on Jer 14:17). (CSB)

**2:12** *lives ebb away*. See Job 30:16; Ps 107:5; Jnh 2:7. (CSB)

*poured out on their mothers' bosom*. They hug and plead for food (perhaps breast milk), (TLSB)

**2:13** *say for you*. See Job 29:11. (CSB)

God is asking what can be brought that will be some measure of comfort from the experience of others. (Kretzmann)

*Daughter of Jerusalem ... Virgin Daughter of Zion.* See **notes** on 1:6; Jer 14:17. (CSB)

DEEP AS THE SEA – Thou hast a flood of afflictions, a sea of troubles, an ocean of miseries. (Kretzmann)

**2:14** *prophets ... false.* Jeremiah often denounced false prophets (see Jer 5:12–13; 6:13–15; 8:10–12; 14:13–15; 23:9–40; 27:9–28:17). (CSB)

Jeremiah had many tirades against the false prophets. Those misled by religious charlatans share the guilt of their deceivers. Gregory says, “While fearing to reprove faults, they vainly flatter evil doers by promising security; neither do they at all discover the iniquity of sinners, since they refrain their voice from chiding. For the language of reproof is the key of discovery, because by chiding it discloses the fault of which even he who has committed it is often himself unaware.” (TLSB)

*worthless.* Or “whitewash(ed)”; for an explanation of this image see Eze 13:10–16; 22:28. (CSB)

*misleading.* The unusual Hebrew word underlying this word comes from the same root as that underlying “banish” in Jer 27:10, 15: The lies of false prophets “mislead” the people and thus lead to “banishment” by the Lord—so they are “banishing” in their effect. (CSB)

They did not reprove for sin, they flattered them in their transgressions; and instead of turning away thy captivity, by turning thee from thy sins, they have pretended visions of good in thy favor, and false burdens for thy enemies. (Kretzmann)

**2:15** *who pass your way.* See 1:12. (CSB)

*clap their hands.* See Job 27:23. (CSB)

*scoff.* See v. 16; see also **note** on Jer 19:8. (CSB)

*shake their heads.* See **note** on Job 16:4; see also Ps 44:14; 109:25; Jer 18:16. (CSB)

All of above actions illustrate scorn and mockery expressing the derision which they felt. (Kretzmann)

*Daughter of Jerusalem.* See **notes** on 1:6; Jer 14:17. (CSB)

*was called the perfection of beauty.* As in Ps 50:2 (see **note** there). (CSB)

Jerusalem had the distinction of being the city of the great King (cf Ps 50:2) (TLSB)

*was called ... the joy of the whole earth.* As in Ps 48:2 (see **note** there; cf. Jer 51:41). (CSB)

It is a question of scornful wonderment, denying Jerusalem's right ever to have borne such designations. To this behavior of strangers is added the mocking triumph of enemies. (Kretzmann)

**2:16** *swallowed her up.* See vv. 2, 5; Jer 51:34. (CSB)

They feel a corresponding satisfaction and pleasure. But the destruction of Jerusalem was not a chance happening, nor was it alone the culmination of men's hateful plans. (Kretzmann)

**2:17** *fulfilled his word.* See Isa 55:11 and **note**. (CSB)

God makes contact with sinners through His Word. The Word comes from God, who authors it and sends it across time and space to the sinner. It will accomplish what God desire and that is the salvation of his people. God assures us in these verses that His Word is effective. It is His Word because it goes out of His mouth and returns to Him. As His Word, it is powerful. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us, "The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (4:12) (PBC)

*long ago.* The days of Moses (see, e.g., the threats of Lev 26:23–39; Dt 28:15–68). (CSB)

The Lord fulfilled the curses of Dt 27–28. (TLAB)

The holiness of the Lord demands the punishment of every act of rebellion against His holy Law. (Kretzmann)

*exalted the horn.* Increased the strength (see NIV text note; see also 1Sa 2:1; Ps 75:4). (CSB)

The enemies of Israel were given power, authority, and victory. (Kretzmann)

**2:18** See Jer 14:17. (CSB)

*O wall.* A city gate is similarly addressed in Isa 14:31. (CSB)

*Daughter of Zion.* A personification of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. (CSB)

**2:19** *watches of the night begin.* See **note** on Jdg 7:19; see also Ps 63:6. (CSB)

Prayer continued into the night, which was divided into watches. (TLSB)

*pour out your heart.* In earnest prayer (see Ps 62:8). (CSB)

*like water.* A common simile with “pour out” (see Dt 12:16, 24; 15:23; Ps 79:3; Hos 5:10). (CSB)

The very heart dissolving in tears, as it were, in the excess of the sorrow caused by the great calamity. (Kretzmann)

*Lift up your hands.* In prayer and praise (see Ps 28:2; 63:4; 1Ti 2:8). (CSB)

*children, who faint from hunger.* See vv. 11–12. (CSB)

**2:20–22** The prayer called for in v. 19. (CSB)

**2:20** *women eat their offspring.* See **note** on Jer 19:9 – (When Jerusalem’s food supply ran out during the Babylonian siege in 586 B.C., cannibalism resulted (see La 2:20; 4:10; Eze 5:10). Such shocking activity was not unprecedented in Israel (see 2Ki 6:28–29), and it would occur again (see Zec 11:9 and note): “A woman ... who ... had fled to Jerusalem ... killed her son, roasted him, and ate one half, concealing and saving the rest” (Josephus, *Jewish War*, 6.3.4). (CSB)

Disobedience to God leads to horrific consequences (Lv 26:26; Dt 28:56). (TLSB)

This was revolting cannibalism caused by excessive hunger. Cf. Lev. 26, 29; 'Deut. 28, 53. (Kretzmann)

*priest and prophet be killed.* The chief priest Seraiah and other temple officials were slain at Riblah by the Babylonians (2Ki 25:18–21; Jer 52:24–27). It appears that others were killed on the spot at Jerusalem. (TLSB)

**2:21** See Jer 6:11 and **note** – (All will be judged, from youngest to oldest.) (CSB)

All classes of people, those of no influence as well as the powerful and mighty. (Kretzmann)

**2:22** *summoned against me.* See 1:15. (CSB)

*terrors on every side.* See **note** on Jer 6:25. (CSB)

From every direction, so that Jerusalem was surrounded by them. (Kretzmann)

*day of the LORD's anger.* The chapter ends as it began (see v. 1). (CSB)

*no one escaped or survived.* See Jer 42:17; 44:14(CSB)

Fortunate is the person who, when experiencing the Lord's punishment, cried out thus in true repentance! (Kretzmann)

**Ch 2** By the Lord's hand, Babylon has destroyed Jerusalem and razed its temple. The consequences of sin have left people slaughtered and the remaining citizens exiled to Babylon. God has turned His back on His people for turning their back on Him. Their worship of false gods violated the covenant dating back to the exodus from Egypt. Their sin has now born hideous fruit. Despite the apostasy of God's people, He still loves them and will bring them back from their captivity to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. From these people, God shall raise up a Savior for all nations. • Lord, teach us to heed Your warnings and repent when we stray, that we might receive Your precious forgiveness. Amen. (TLSB)