

THE DESCENT IN THE DARKNESS *continued*

(a) THE STOOL IS DESERTED; 2:1: The throne and the footstool point us to the sovereignty and omnipotence of God, though in **Lamentations 2:1** the emphasis is of God's presence with His people, typified by the ark of the covenant (cf. **1 Chronicles 28:2**). God put His footstool aside – a deliberate oversight rather than amnesia.

(b) THE SANCTUARY IS DEMOLISHED; 2:6: just like a garden hut being collapsed, so the Lord tore down His temple.

(c) THE SABBATHS ARE DESECRATED; 2:6: weekly observance of the Sabbath goes back to the fourth commandment (**Exodus 20:8-10**); its necessity is reinforced in **Isaiah 58:13-14**, while this point is established in **Lamentations**: if God's sabbaths are not valued and observed as they should be, then He Himself will deprive us of the benefits of them.

(d) THE SERVICE IS DISMISSED, affecting king and priest, **2:6**, altar and sanctuary, **2:7**, law and prophets, **2:9**. If God's people despise His Word, God is careful to punish them by taking that Word away.

[4] THE DISCORDANT: FROM MELODY TO MISERY.

(a) THE TERMS OF THEIR MISERY; 2:5: Two words, from the same Hebrew root and sharing a similar sound, are used to express the intense sorrow – “*mourning and lamentation*” – pretty much the title of this Book! **(b) THE TYPE OF THEIR MISERY; 2:8:** the very rubble cries out, lamenting [*abal*] and languishing [*amal*], both sick and playing the mourner.

(c) THE TARGETS FOR THEIR MISERY; 2:10: both young and old. “*When the Lord smites, and for sin also, doubly and tenfold distressing is that misery*” (Robert Hawker).

It is time for us to weep!



MEETINGS TODAY

- Morning Worship – 11.30am:
4th Message in the Lamentations Series: “*The Descent in Darkness.*”
- Evening Service – 7.00pm:
Rev. David Priestley to preach.



ILLUMINATING TOWN HALL IN LGBT COLOURS

A letter has been sent by email to all 40 councillors on Ards Council by our ministers within the Borough, expressing “*deep shock and sadness upon learning of the divisive ... proposal to light the ‘Town Hall in Rainbow Colours to coincide with Pride Day each year on the first Saturday of August.’*” The ministers note how, “*Pride is a political campaign group seeking to promote what they term ‘marriage equality’ ... as Bible-believing Christians, with a love for all and a desire for the welfare of society, we are duty bound to uphold the Bible teaching that marriage is a monogamous relationship between a man and a woman – Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:4, 5; Eph. 5:31. We find it incomprehensible that, under the guise of noble sounding words such as ‘diversity’, any councillor would vote to promote the agenda of a small minority, an agenda that is viewed by many to be aggressively anti-Biblical.*” The full text of this letter will hopefully appear in the local press this week. May the Lord bless these ministers for their noble and biblical stand on this issue.



THE DESCENT IN THE DARKNESS

Lamentations 2:1-10.

The French have a phrase for it – *déjà vu* – that sense of having been there before. It can be argued that the scale of the events that **Lamentations 1 and 2** deal with demand a re-run, a recap. The number of verses (22), their alphabetical arrangement (each starting with a consecutive letter in the Hebrew alphabet), and the structure of both are similar (the ‘mirror image’ effect where **2:1** links with **2:22**, **2:2** with **2:21**, etc.) ... but this is *not* a case of tedious repetition for the sake of it. While **chapter 1** focuses on the comfortless condition in which Jerusalem now finds herself, the **2nd chapter** highlights why they suffer – because of the Lord’s punishment of their sins.

[1] THE ASCENT: FROM POVERTY TO PRIVILEGE.

God’s dealings with His own covenant people are in focus; those who have been supremely privileged (cf. **Amos 3:2**; **John 15:16**; **1 John 4:10**; **1 Peter 2:9-10**) – are now being severely punished; **Lamentations 2:1-2** (cf. **Amos 3:2**). John Calvin: “For at the first sight it seemed very unreasonable that a people whom God had not only received into favour, but with whom He had made a perpetual covenant, should thus be forsaken by Him.” Notice the term “*the LORD*” (Jehovah – a name that is most closely associated with this covenant) is avoided from **Lamentations 2:1-5** because what is here described speaks of *the absence of covenant blessing*.

[2] THE DESCENT: FROM PRIVILEGE TO

PUNISHMENT. No rollercoaster ever had a dip as dramatic as this Jerusalem’s fall in **2:1**!

(a) The GENERAL STATEMENTS ABOUT HER

PUNISHMENT; (i) About HER DARKNESS (**2:1**). This storm cloud was in stark contrast to the pillar of cloud in **Exodus (13:21-22; 14:19-20)**. In **Lamentations** the circumstances have reversed: God has now become a darkness to His people. As

Matthew Henry put it, “*That side of the cloud is now turned towards them which was turned towards the Egyptians.*” This unrelieved darkness and gloom is emphasised by the use of the words “*His anger*” at both the start and the end of **2:1**.

(ii) About HER DESCENT; a. THE REMOVAL OF THE GLORY, **2:1**: Israel, the covenant people, no longer enjoyed the privilege of God’s presence in their midst and His sanctuary was now exposed to the ravages of the enemy; b. THE RELEGATION TO THE GROUND, **2:2**. Note re this punishment, its i. IMPLACABILITY (“*hath not pitied*”), ii. IRREVERSIBILITY (“*swallowed up*” – **2:2,5**), and iii. INTENSITY (a series of strong verbs in **2:1-8** unpack the judgment; God acts as an enemy).

(b) THE GRUESOME SPECIFICS OF HER

PUNISHMENT. (i) THE SCOPE OF THIS PUNISHMENT:

FROM PASTURES TO PALACES; **2:2** (cf. **2:5**);

(ii) THE SEVERANCE THROUGH THIS PUNISHMENT: FROM PROMISE TO PRACTICE; **2:2**: land deprived of its special character; (iii) THE SEVERITY OF THIS PUNISHMENT: FROM

POWER TO PARALYSIS; **2:3**: Power cut off – the “*horn*” is a familiar symbol for power or pride (cf. **Deuteronomy 33:17**;

Psalm 75:10; **92:10** ... cf. **John 15:5**) – and Protection carried off – indicated by the removal of God’s right hand (cf. **Psalm**

98:1) ... plus Punishment is brought in, pictured as fire;

(iv) THE SPECTACLE IN THIS PUNISHMENT: FROM PROTECTOR TO PUNISHER; **2:4-5** – note a. COMPARISON: the terms “*like*” (**2:4**) and “*as*” (**2:5**) are key; b.

COMPREHENSIVENESS: the “*bow*” claims Calvin includes every other weapon; c. CONSUMPTION: the people who were formerly “*pleasant*” in His eye are now subject to slaughter;

(v) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PUNISHMENT: FROM

PRECISION TO PAIN: None of this was by chance as God determined to do it; **2:8**: measured out precisely. NB. the change

in the actions of God’s hand – withdrawn from protection, **2:3**; but now stretched out to oppose and destroy, **2:4,8**.

Churches that no longer stand for truth will be judged (cf. **2 Corinthians 4:2**; **Revelation 2:5**) – as will individuals (**Hebrews 12:5-11**; **John 3:36**).

[3] THE ESTRANGEMENT: FROM PRESENCE TO ABSENCE.