

Lamentations 4 “Will the Sun Ever Rise Again?”**

Main Idea: When life is dark and we’re wondering if the sun will ever rise again in our lives, there are four questions we need to ask ourselves, four issues that Jeremiah helped his people face in Lamentations 4.

I. Issue #1: How bad is it (1-10)?

- A. Jeremiah describes the atrocities committed against his people.
- B. Jeremiah describes the atrocities committed by his people.
 1. My people are being treated like pots of clay (1-2).
 2. My people have become heartless (3-4).
 3. My people have been through something worse than Sodom (5-6).
 4. My people have lost their leaders (7-8).
 5. My people have experienced and done the unthinkable (9-10).

II. Issue #2: How did it get this way (11-16)?

- A. The tragedy was the result of the Lord’s wrath (11).
 1. The wrath of God is a good attribute.
 2. The wrath of God points us to the cross.
- B. The tragedy was the result of sin (12-16).
 1. The prophets and priests shed the blood of the righteous.
 2. The prophets and priests alienated themselves from God and man.

III. Issue #3: What have we tried that didn’t work (17-20)?

- A. We put our trust in men, rather than in God (17-19).
 1. Men failed us (17).
 2. Men stalked us (18).
 3. Men chased us in the desert (19).
- B. We put the Lord’s gifts above the Lord Himself (20).
 1. We’re so prone to turn good things into God things in our lives.
 2. Whenever a good thing becomes a God thing, that’s a bad thing.

IV. Issue #4: What do I know for sure (21-22)?

- A. The ungodly may be laughing now, but their day is coming (21).
- B. God’s people may be hurting now, but their night will end (22).

Application: Three lessons to remember when life gets tough...

1. When life gets tough it’s okay to acknowledge that life is tough!
2. When life gets tough it’s important to ask ourselves why.
3. When life gets tough it’s vital to put our trust in the One who is trustworthy.

If the sun is shining in your life, this message isn’t for you...*not yet*. Granted, it’s just a matter of time and it will be for you, so you might want to listen. But I’m talking to some people who desperately need this message *right now*. They are people who are wondering if the sun will ever shine again in their lives. They’re wondering this because life for them feels like one long, dark, unending night. If you feel that way, or if you know people who feel that way that you’re burdened to help, then I have good news for you. It’s because of God’s amazing love for such people that He gave us the book of Lamentations.

By the way, you may need this message more than you realize if you’ve been chewing on a pill that we descendants of Adam love to taste. It’s called *denial*, which is a common reaction to hardship, to deny how bad it really is. Listen to some examples...

“We’re not having financial problems, not at all. Things are just a little tight this month,” says the man as he sifts through his mail and sees another overdraft notice from the bank.

“What do you mean we’re having marriage trouble, *dear*? Okay, our marriage isn’t perfect, but whose is? You’re overreacting. We’ll be just fine. I’m going to bed.”

“I’ve got seniority. It’s too bad that others are losing their jobs, but my company needs me. They won’t let me go.”

Part of experiencing God’s hope and help involves coming to grips with the fact that we need it. Indeed, one of the

great barriers we must overcome if we are going to benefit from God's good gifts to us is our own pride. *God opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble* (James 4:6).

You say, "Okay, I admit it. I feel like I'm in the dark right now. What do I need to do?" Here's the answer. In Lamentations 4, the unnamed writer (I think it was Jeremiah) puts in black and white four painful realities that you and I must face if we're going to glorify God in the dark seasons of life. But in order to appreciate the specifics of Lamentations 4, we need to back up and set the stage for our study.

Some Observations about the Book of Lamentations: It takes about twenty minutes to read the book of Lamentations. There are five individual poems in this book, and these five poetic lamentations work together to fulfill two functions: *mourning* and *confession*.

First of all, in Lamentations the writer is teaching his people how to *mourn* corporately for the judgment which the Lord had rightfully sent them. The Babylonian army had just devastated the wayward nation of Judah, yet in His mercy God gave His people a mourning guide of sorts. How kind of God to help them respond to their suffering, even though the suffering was the result of their own sin!

Secondly, the book calls for *confession*. Jeremiah shows his people what they must do since they have violated God's law, namely confess their sin, and call upon God for deliverance.

As we saw last time, chapter 3 is the climax of the book, and the middle section of chapter 3 is the climax of the climax. The entire book is like a black canvas with dark colors on it. But in the middle of chapter 3 Jeremiah throws a splash of brilliant light into the painting. He utters a nearly incredible faith-cry, "Great is Your faithfulness!" The prophet's situation didn't change, but his perspective sure did in chapter 3.

And then the dark colors returned. In chapter 4 Jeremiah once again paints with blacks and dark grays and deep purples as he ponders again the harsh reality of life for his people.

As I mentioned at the outset of our series, I am indebted to Walter Kaiser's commentary on Lamentations, *A Biblical Approach to Personal Suffering*, and will be referring to it again in this message. Kaiser suggests that the tone of Lamentations 4 is "more matter-of-fact" than the previous three chapters. Whereas in chapters 1-3 Jeremiah describes the horrors of God's judgment and responds with weeping, in chapter 4 the emotion is more even keel and he simply states the facts, the harsh facts.

Kaiser proposes that in so doing, Jeremiah is "putting a name to pain." Yes, God is faithful and loving and gracious, as was affirmed in chapter 3. But life is still bitter, even overwhelming for Jeremiah's people. And for good reason. Thus, "the metaphors [of Lamentations 4] give handles to the suffering so that it can be grasped and handed over to God."^[1]

Let me point out the change in focus we've seen as we've moved through the book...

Lamentations 1—focused on the city of Jerusalem

Lamentations 2—focused on the Temple

Lamentations 3—focused on the sufferings of Jeremiah as a representative sufferer

Lamentations 4—laments the afflictions that fell on the whole population^[2]

There's another change we're about to see. Chapter 4 is shorter than the previous chapters, not in the number of verses but in the number of lines. The poems in chapters 1-3 contain three-lined stanzas, but in chapter 4 the stanzas have only two lines. The prophet is beginning to wind down. The grieving is almost done. In chapter 5 there will be only one line per stanza.

Quite honestly, in chapter four Jeremiah reminds me of an insurance adjuster who has just returned from the site of a massive catastrophe, and here's his report. In verses 1-10 he describes the cost analysis of the damage he witnessed in the devastated city. Then in verses 11-16 he records what caused this damage. Next he puts into his report some firsthand testimonials from people who endured the crisis (verses 17-20). He concludes his assessment with some personal counsel for the survivors in verses 21-22. So we might outline the chapter in terms of *the cost*, *the causes*, *the crisis*, and *the counsel* that Jeremiah gave the Jews six centuries before Christ.

But God never intended His Word merely to be history lessons for us. What happened to Israel happened as examples for us, in fact, as *warnings* for us, says 1 Corinthians 10:11. So I've tried to personalize the outline because there's a message here for us, and I think it's this...

When life is dark and we're wondering if the sun will ever rise again in our lives, there are four questions we need to ask ourselves, four issues we must face as Jeremiah's people did in Lamentations 4.

I. Issue #1: How bad is it (1-10)?

That's the question Jeremiah addresses for his people at the outset. To say that it was *bad* is an understatement. We're talking about *atrocities* of the highest order, two kinds.

A. Jeremiah describes the atrocities committed *against* his people. As well as...

B. Jeremiah describes the atrocities committed *by* his people. The text actually bounces back and forth between the two types, as we'll see. Jeremiah starts by highlighting sins committed *against* his people.

1. *My people are being treated like pots of clay (1-2).* "How the gold has lost its luster^[3], the fine gold become dull! The sacred gems are scattered at the head of every street. How the precious sons of Zion, once worth their weight in gold, are now considered as pots of clay, the work of a potter's hands!"

Zion is a reference to Jerusalem. To be *sons of Zion* was to be part of God's covenant people. That was a privilege, for God has entered into relationship with only one nation, Israel. But in 586 B.C. the Jewish nation didn't feel so privileged, for their Jewish sons, once worth their weight in gold, were being treated like cheap clay pots.

That reminds me of something I saw all over the place when I lived in Israel. At nearly every archaeological site I ever visited, I saw broken fragments of clay pottery. I never saw one ounce of gold there, but the clay chips were everywhere.

Jeremiah's metaphor is clear. Gold is special, and that's what we were. Clay pots are a dime a dozen, and that's what we are now.

2. *My people have become heartless (3-4).* "Even jackals offer their breasts to nurse their young, but my people have become heartless like ostriches in the desert. Because of thirst the infant's tongue sticks to the roof of its mouth; the children beg for bread, but no one gives it to them."

My people, says Jeremiah. Notice how he identifies with his country (he'll do it again in verse 6 and in verse 9). He loved his country for they were God's people. But they sure weren't acting like it. Even a wild animal shows care for its young, but it was so bad in Israel that children were dying of hunger and no one gave them food.

In reality, the people brought this famine upon themselves. You may recall that the Lord through Jeremiah had told them to surrender to the Babylonians, insisting that since they had passed the point of no return they were going into exile (see Jer. 27 & 29). But they didn't believe the Lord's word. They believed they could fix the dilemma their own way. And so they refused to surrender and began to starve themselves to death.

3. *My people have been through something worse than Sodom (5-6).* Verse 6 states, "Those who once ate delicacies are destitute in the streets. Those nurtured in purple now lie on ash heaps." He's talking about the upper crust, the people who once feasted on fine food and wore purple (the color of royalty). Talk about lowering your standard of living! No more good life for them. Now they're lying on ash heaps and being treated like garbage.

Listen to Jeremiah's assessment in verse 6, "The punishment of my people is greater than that of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment without a hand turned to help her." It's worse than Sodom! How was this judgment worse? In Sodom's case the destruction was instant, by fire, but this was a slow death, by starvation.

4. *My people have lost their leaders (7-8).* "Their princes were brighter than snow and whiter than milk, their bodies more ruddy than rubies, their appearance like sapphires. But now they are blacker than soot; they are not recognized in the streets. Their skin has shriveled on their bones; it has become as dry as a stick."

What's one of the first things that happens after a tragedy hits a nation? Think of 9-11, or Katrina. In our case, our president gets on the television and addresses the nation with words of assurance, right? "Yes, a great tragedy has occurred. I'm aware of it. I'm authorizing the following response to it." And so on. That's the response we expect. But what if your leaders can't respond? What if they're powerless to help, or worse, what if you don't have any leaders? Such was the case in Judah. Blacker than soot, unrecognizable, dry as a stick. My people have lost their leaders!

5. *My people have experienced and done the unthinkable (9-10).* "Those killed by the sword are better off than those who die of famine; racked with hunger, they waste away for lack of food from the field. With their own hands compassionate women have cooked their own children, who became their food when my people were destroyed."

You say, "What in the world is Jeremiah doing? It's bad enough that this atrocity happened, but why in the world is he writing about it?" Again, Kaiser said it well. He's putting a name to pain. He's giving his people handles for their suffering so they can grasp it and hand it over to God.

Think of it this way. Sometimes we say (or at least think) after we've been in the dark for awhile, "Things couldn't get any worse in my life." But that's not true. Life for the Jews in Jeremiah's day was about as bad as anyone could imagine, but it could be worse, and Jeremiah knew it. You say, "What could be worse than this?" It's when people go through tragedies like this and turn *from* the Lord rather than *to* Him.

Jesus put it this way, "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and *loses his soul* (Mark 8:36)?" And

what about the man who loses the whole world? That's bad, yes. But to lose in this world and then lose your soul for eternity? Unthinkable.

How bad is it? As painful as the answer may be, that's the first issue we must face if we want to experience the hope and help of God.

II. Issue #2: How did it get this way (11-16)?

Jeremiah gives two answers to the question.

A. The tragedy was the result of the Lord's wrath (11). "The LORD has given full vent to his wrath; he has poured out his fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion that consumed her foundations."

Why did this tragedy happen? Jeremiah again and again shows his people that the Sovereign Lord is behind this. Yes, the Babylonian army brought the matches, but the Lord set the fire. As we saw in 3:1 the Babylonians were the rod of His wrath, but He swung the rod. Let's keep in mind, as we saw last time in 3:33, "He does not willingly (lit. 'from the heart') bring affliction," for He is kind and gracious. But nonetheless He brings it. No one forces His hand. No one surprises Him. And here we're told that He brings it as an expression of His wrath.

What is God's wrath? I recognize that the wrath of God makes us feel uncomfortable. We're almost embarrassed to see it on the pages of our Bible. Shame on us. In reality...

1. *The wrath of God is a good attribute.* How so? Think of it this way. Suppose a traveler came to our town and raped and murdered a ten year old girl. And suppose at the trial, while the guilty man stood there with a stone face and not a sign of remorse, the judge surprised everyone when he said these words. "We are a loving community. While we sorrow for the loss of one of our dear families, and while it is clear that this man has committed the crime, I am going to set this man free and we're going to welcome him into our community with open arms."

You'd be incensed, right? You'd feel some wrath, wouldn't you? And for good reason. We instinctively know that judges are not supposed to set law-breakers free.

"Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" is the question that Abraham asked God while looking over the city of Sodom in Genesis 18:25. He will do what's right.

Here's a helpful definition from *The New Bible Dictionary*, "The permanent attitude of the holy and just God when confronted by sin and evil is designated his 'wrath'. It is inadequate to regard this term merely as a description of 'the inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe' or as another way of speaking of the results of sin. It is rather a personal quality, without which God would cease to be fully righteous and his love would degenerate into sentimentality."^[4]

Well said. Without His wrath, God's love would degenerate into sentimentality. The wrath of God is a good attribute.

2. *The wrath of God points us to the cross.* In fact, at the cross of Jesus we see God's love *and* wrath in action. How so? Back in the garden God told Adam, "If you eat, you will die." He ate, and while his sin cut him off from God immediately, he kept living, and had sons and raised a family and worked a job and enjoyed a host of other earthly blessings. Just like we do.

Explain that. How can a holy and just God let guilty sinners keep living in His world? Why doesn't He display the full fury of His wrath every time we sin? It's because in His grace He chose to punish a substitute, namely His own Son! As 1 Peter 2:24 explains, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."

The fact is, God will punish every sin justly. On the cross He poured out the fury of His wrath on His own Son who there endured the full penalty of sin. Not His sin, for He was perfect. He bore the sins of every person who would ever repent and trust in Him for salvation. No matter what you have done, my friend, God will forgive you if you'll put your faith in His Son.

"What if I don't?" you ask. Then you will remain under His wrath forever and ever. To borrow from John Calvin, here's what you can expect: "Unhappy consciences find no rest, but are vexed and driven about by a dire whirlwind, feeling as if torn by an angry God, pierced through with deadly darts, terrified by his thunderbolts and crushed by the weight of his hand; so that it were easier to plunge into abysses and whirlpools than endure these terrors for a moment. How fearful, then, must it be to be thus beset throughout eternity!"^[5]

We're answering the question, "How did it get this way, this incredible suffering?" The answer for the person in eternal hell is the same as the answer for the person who felt like they'd just gone through hell in Jeremiah's day. It's the result of the Lord's wrath, says Jeremiah. That's the ultimate reason. And here's the immediate one...

B. The tragedy was the result of sin (12-16). Whose sin brought about the fall of Jerusalem? We're given the

answer in verses 12-13, “The kings of the earth did not believe, nor did any of the world’s people, that enemies and foes could enter the gates of Jerusalem. But it happened because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed within her the blood of the righteous.”

According to verse 13, what was the root problem that led to this destruction? The prophets and priests were sinners. As go the leaders of a nation, so goes that nation. In this case the *spiritual* leaders were the problem. And what specific sin did they commit?

1. *The prophets and priests shed the blood of the righteous.* They did it directly by killing godly men like Zechariah (see Matt. 23:35) and Uriah (Jer. 26:20, 23). They did it indirectly by preaching “Peace, peace” when there was no peace (Jer. 6:13-15; 23:9-32), and leading the nation into a false sense of security.

And what happened to these so-called spiritual leaders who led God’s people astray? Jeremiah says that...

2. *The prophets and priests alienated themselves from God and man.* Notice verses 14-16, “Now they grope through the streets like men who are blind. They are so defiled with blood that no one dares to touch their garments. ‘Go away! You are unclean!’ men cry to them. ‘Away! Away! Don’t touch us!’ When they flee and wander about, people among the nations say, ‘They can stay here no longer.’ The LORD himself has scattered them; he no longer watches over them. The priests are shown no honor, the elders no favor.”

How ironic! These are the men whose job it was to show sinners how to be clean before a holy God. But now their people cry out, “You are unclean!” and want nothing to do with them.

When you’re in the darkness, the questions are vital to face, my friend. One, how bad is it, and two, how did it get this way? It would do us well to take inventory at this point. Is the Lord trying to get your attention in some way? Is there any unresolved sin in your life that needs attention? There’s a remedy for sin, praise God! Turn to Him without delay.

III. Issue #3: What have we tried that didn’t work (17-20)?

Living in the past isn’t a good thing, but learning from the past sure is. It’s good to look back and learn from our blunders. Someone has rightly observed, “The definition of *insanity* is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” So when life isn’t going well, it’s a good idea to remember the faulty ways you’ve tried to fix things in the past that didn’t work.

That’s what Jeremiah does in this third section. He shifts pronouns to the first person plural “we,” “us,” and “our.” He doesn’t talk down to his people, but includes himself as he helps them consider two faulty choices they made in the past.

A. We put our trust in men, rather than in God (17-19). That’s verse 17, “Moreover, our eyes failed, looking in vain for help; from our towers we watched for a nation that could not save us.”

Did you catch that? What did the Jews do when they were surrounded by the Babylonian army? Did they turn to the Lord and seek His help? No. *We watched for a nation*, says Jeremiah.

And by the way, what’s amazing is that they did this *after* they experienced the destruction of 586 B.C. You can check out Jeremiah 42-44 for the details (and Ezek 29:16).

The nation was Egypt. In spite of God’s attempt to get His people’s attention, in spite of all they’d been through, instead of turning *to* God where did God’s people put their trust? Their first choice was to ask Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt to save them, to come and rescue them from the Babylonians. In fact, they trusted Egypt so much that they actually broke their treaty with their Babylonian captors, and fled to Egypt. [6]

Of course, Egypt could not save them. No human savior could, as Jeremiah reminded his people in verses 17-19. These are the cold, hard facts.

1. *Men failed us (17).* We looked “in vain for help,” says verse 17, as we “watched for a nation that could not save us.” But not only did men fail us, but...

2. *Men stalked us (18).* “Men stalked us at every step, so we could not walk in our streets. Our end was near, our days were numbered, for our end had come.” And not only did men fail us and stalk us, but...

3. *Men chased us in the desert (19).* “Our pursuers were swifter than eagles in the sky; they chased us over the mountains and lay in wait for us in the desert.”

The point is this. If we put our trust in men rather than in God in the past, and men failed us, stalked us, and chased us, does it make sense to keep doing it? No way. But isn’t that what we do? We find ourselves in the dark and where do we turn for help? To a human savior. A political party. A therapist. A banker. Someone we can *see* to fix our problem. Or worse, to a bottle, or a pill, or a thrill to make it go away.

Why are we so prone to look to the creature rather than our Creator when we’re in trouble? Jeremiah said it

clearly in Jeremiah 17:5-6, “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes.”

There’s something else we tried that didn’t work, says Jeremiah next. Not only did we put our trust in men rather than in God, but...

B. We put the Lord’s gifts above the Lord Himself (20). “The LORD’s anointed, our very life breath, was caught in their traps. We thought that under his shadow we would live among the nations.”

Who’s “the LORD’s anointed”? He’s talking about Judah’s king, Zedekiah. That king was a gift from God in fulfillment of the messianic promise He made to David. The problem was, the people started putting their hope in the gift rather than the Giver.

Last week I listened to Pastor Mark Driscoll preach a message he calls, “Ministry Idolatry.” He offered this challenge to pastors and church leaders. “When a good thing becomes a God-thing, that’s a bad thing.” Is having a God-anointed king a good thing? Sure. But when that good thing (a king) becomes a God thing, that’s a very bad thing. It’s called idolatry.

Quite frankly, most of the things that become idols in our lives are in themselves good things. Is a child a good thing? Of course, but when your child becomes the focus of your life, that’s a bad thing because that place is reserved for Jesus, isn’t it? Is a job a good thing? Sure, but when your job becomes the source of your identity, that’s a bad thing for we’re supposed to find our identity in Jesus, aren’t we? Is a friend a good thing? Yes, but when pleasing your friend becomes more important than pleasing your Savior, that’s a bad thing.

In reality, we’re just like the people of Judah, aren’t we?

1. *We’re so prone to turn good things into God things in our lives.* And know this...

2. *Whenever a good thing becomes a God thing, that’s a bad thing.* Think of it this way. King Zedekiah became a “functional savior” for the Jews. He’s “our very life breath,” they said. Do you have any functional saviors in your life?

When a young lady says, “I’d like to have a husband,” is that a good thing? Yes, but she must guard herself lest that good thing become a *God* thing in her heart, for God never intended for a husband to be her savior. That’s Jesus’ place, isn’t it?

Is it alright to have a pension? Sure, preparing for winter is a good thing. But if that pension becomes your source of security in life, that’s a bad thing, for Jesus is our Savior, not a pension plan.

The list goes on and on. A college degree. Good? Yes, but don’t view it as your savior. A nice home? It’s good, but don’t let it be your God. Your kids’ respect (or your boss’s, for that matter)? Also good, but don’t live for it. That’s idolatry. We’re supposed to live for Him.

Do you see what Jeremiah is doing? He’s helping his people look back and see where they got off track. They had put their trust in men rather than in God, and they had put the Lord’s gifts above the Giver of those gifts. Those two things never work, my friend. So if we’re doing them, it’s no wonder we’re in the dark.

There’s one final issue to face...

IV. Issue #4: What do I know for sure (21-22)?

I love the piece of counsel that says, “When you’re in the dark, don’t doubt what God has shown you in the light.” Well, here’s some counsel that Jeremiah gave his people while it was still dark, two certainties...

A. The ungodly may be laughing now, but their day is coming (21). “Rejoice and be glad, O Daughter of Edom, you who live in the land of Uz. But to you also the cup will be passed; you will be drunk and stripped naked.”

He’s mentions Edom here. The Edomites were Esau’s descendant, and Edom was a neighboring nation to Judah.^[7] How did Edom respond when Jerusalem fell? Check out the book of Obadiah which says, they laughed and gloated. The world loves to gloat when God chastens His people. Jeremiah says (I think sarcastically), “Go right ahead and rejoice, Edom. But know this. Your day is coming.”

Beloved, it’s true. The ungodly may be laughing now, but their day is coming. That’s an unalterable certainty. And so is this...

B. God’s people may be hurting now, but their night will end (22). “O Daughter of Zion, your punishment will end; he will not prolong your exile. But, O Daughter of Edom, he will punish your sin and expose your wickedness.”

There’s the only flicker of light in this otherwise dark fourth lamentation. Zion, your punishment will end. The Lord won’t let your exile last forever.

You say, “That’s a strange way to end a poem for hurting people.” Maybe, but maybe it sounds strange to us because, in reality, we don’t know how to help hurting people. Remember, this is God-inspired Scripture we’ve just read. Jeremiah (or whoever wrote it) got it right. I think there are some things here we desperately need to consider.

Application: Three lessons to remember when life gets tough...

1. *When life gets tough it's okay to acknowledge that life is tough!* Are you hurting today? It's okay to admit it. In fact, it's vital that you do, to yourself, perhaps to others who can help, and certainly to the Lord.

2. *When life gets tough it's important to ask ourselves why.* Face the facts. How bad is it? How did it get this way? What have you already tried that didn't work? And what do you know for sure? Maybe you're in the dark because you've been sinned against, as was Jeremiah. Maybe it's the result of your own sin, as with Judah. Maybe it's a combination. Regardless, it's important to engage in some honest, Bible-based evaluation.

3. *When life gets tough it's vital to put our trust in the One who is trustworthy.* To Him who said, "Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28)."

****Note:** This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] W. Kaiser, p. 97; he cites Eugene Peterson in the quote comparing metaphors to handles.

[2] Kaiser, p. 99.

[3] Some critics object that gold does not tarnish. But as H. L. Ellison observes, "Since the second line refers to the destroyed temple, we can easily see a reference to its gold-covered panels and golden vessels so covered with dust that their value is no longer discernible. Similarly, it is no longer possible to discern the value of the enslaved survivors (v. 2)." H. L. Ellison, p. 726.

[4] Wood, D. R. W., & Marshall, I. H. (1996). *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed.) (1250). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

[5] John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, III, xxv, 12.

[6] Kaiser, p. 106. It got so bad that when Jeremiah tried to encourage the surviving Jews to get rid of their idolatrous ways, the men rejected his counsel with smugness (Jer 44:16-18) and said, in essence, "If it takes idolatry to experience economic growth and good times again, then idolatry it will be!"

[7] In a sense, Edom stands for all the enemies of Judah. Observation by H. L. Ellison, p. 729.