

10/19/25

Sermon Title: Comparing the present state of Jerusalem with its former days...

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: laments 4:1-22

(laments 4:1) How the gold has lost its luster, the fine gold become dull!
The sacred gems are scattered at every street corner.

(laments 4:2) How the precious children of Zion, once worth their weight in gold, are now considered as pots of clay, the work of a potter's hands!

(laments 4:3) Even jackals offer their breasts to nurse their young, but my people have become heartless like ostriches in the desert.

(laments 4:4) 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.

(laments 4:5) Those who once ate delicacies are destitute in the streets. Those brought up in royal purple now lie on ash heaps.

(laments 4:6) The punishment of my people is greater than that of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment without a hand turned to help her.

(laments 4:7) Their princes were brighter than snow and whiter than milk, their bodies more ruddy than rubies, their appearance like lapis lazuli.

(laments 4:8) 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.

(laments 4:9) 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.

(laments 4:10) With their own hands compassionate women have cooked their own children, who became their food when my people were destroyed.

(laments 4:11) 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.

(laments 4:12) The kings of the earth did not believe, nor did any of the peoples of the world, that enemies and foes could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

(lamentations 4:13) 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.

(lamentations 4:14) Now they grope through the streets as if they were blind. They are so defiled with blood that no one dares to touch their garments.

(lamentations 4:15) “Go away! You are unclean!” people 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.”

(lamentations 4:16) The LORD himself has scattered them; he no longer watches over them. The priests are shown no honor, the elders no favor.

(lamentations 4:17) Moreover, our eyes failed, looking in vain for help; from our towers we watched for a nation that could not save us.

(lamentations 4:18) People 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.

(lamentations 4:19) Our pursuers were swifter than eagles in the sky; they chased us over the mountains and lay in wait for us in the desert.

(lamentations 4:20) 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.

(lamentations 4:21) Rejoice and be glad, Daughter 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.

(lamentations 4:22) Your punishment will end, Daughter Zion; he will not prolong your exile. But he will punish your sin, Daughter Edom, and expose your wickedness.

This is the fourth lament of the prophet Jeremiah.

Like chapters 1 and 2, this chapter also begins with the word “*Alas*” (lament). Jeremiah laments as he beholds the tragic sight of the people of Zion—once as precious and unchanging as gold—now stripped of their nation by Babylon, carried off into captivity, and suffering from hunger and despair.

Jeremiah speaks of Israel's tragic destruction, along with his rebuke of the leaders and the account of their downfall.

Verses 1–10 describe the destruction of the people,
verses 11–16 the fall of the prophets and priests,
and verses 17–20 the ruin of the king.

The sight of the people being destroyed was utterly tragic.

Jeremiah grieves that the treasures of the temple—its furnishings, ornaments, and sacred items—have lost their worth, that the stones of the sanctuary have been scattered in the streets, and that the once-precious inhabitants of Jerusalem are now treated like common clay pots.

(lamentations 4:1) How the gold has lost its luster, the fine gold become dull!
The sacred gems are scattered at every street corner.

(lamentations 4:2) How the precious children of Zion, once worth their weight in gold, are now considered as pots of clay, the work of a potter's hands!

When King Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, he not only made all the furnishings of the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place out of gold, but even overlaid the walls and the spaces between the stones of the floor with gold.

Therefore, when Babylon conquered Jerusalem, its soldiers stripped the temple—not only taking the golden furnishings but also tearing out the stones from the walls and floors to scrape out the gold that was between them.

For this reason, the stones of the sanctuary were scattered in the streets.

Jeremiah laments the tragic state of the Israelites, who, because of the severe famine, could no longer even feed their own children.

(lamentations 4:3) Even jackals offer their breasts to nurse their young, but my people have become heartless like ostriches in the desert.

(lamentations 4:4) 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.

Jeremiah says that the mothers of Israel have become worse than wild jackals, who instinctively nurse their young.

He compares them to ostriches, which lack maternal affection.

The reason the mothers of Israel became so cruel was because of the famine — there was no food left.

Jerusalem had been besieged by the Babylonian army for about two years, and the famine had become unbearable.

Those who once wore scarlet garments and lived like nobles had now become beggars, wandering and pleading for food.

(lamentations 4:5) Those who once ate delicacies are destitute in the streets. Those brought up in royal purple now lie on ash heaps.

Jeremiah mentions that the reason they were destroyed so suddenly was because of their sin.

(lamentations 4:6) The punishment of my people is greater than that of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment without a hand turned to help her.

Sodom was destroyed in an instant by God's punishment because of its sin.

Jeremiah declares that the sins of the people of Israel were even greater than those of Sodom.

Had the people of Judah listened to the warnings of the prophets and repented, they would not have fallen into such a miserable state.

However, they hardened their hearts and refused to listen to God's word, bringing destruction upon themselves.

It is the ruinous and shameful state of the leaders of Judah who once lived in luxury.

(lamentations 4:7) Their princes were brighter than snow and whiter than milk, their bodies more ruddy than rubies, their appearance like lapis lazuli.

(lamentations 4:8) 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.

A horrifying tragedy has unfolded — parents are eating their own children just to survive.

(lamentations 4:9) 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.

(lamentations 4:10) With their own hands compassionate women have cooked their own children, who became their food when my people were destroyed.

Women who were not originally evil have resorted to the horrific act of boiling and eating their own children.

This scene reveals how the agony of destruction can drive human beings to utter misery and cruelty.

Jeremiah then speaks of the downfall of the prophets and priests.

No one in the world had ever imagined that Jerusalem could fall.

Because Jerusalem was the city God Himself protected, people believed no army could ever enter its gates.

Yet the city was conquered and burned by the Babylonian army.

(lamentations 4:11) 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.

(lamentations 4:12) The kings of the earth did not believe, nor did any of the peoples of the world, that enemies and foes could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

This was truly a shocking event.

It was the Lord who, in His wrath, set fire to Zion and burned its foundations.

God allowed the enemy, Babylon, to bring Judah to ruin.

The reason Judah and its people were so completely destroyed was that the prophets and priests had shed the blood of the righteous.

(lamentations 4:13) 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.

In the temple of Jerusalem, where the Holy God dwelt, vile and corrupt acts were committed by the prophets and priests.

They abused their positions of authority and committed all kinds of defilement. Seeing this, God finally destroyed these impure prophets and priests.

In the end, they were driven out of Jerusalem and wandered the streets. Like lepers despised and rejected by people, they were cast out to roam aimlessly. Even foreigners looked down on them with contempt.

(lamentations 4:14) Now they grope through the streets as if they were blind. They are so defiled with blood that no one dares to touch their garments.

(lamentations 4:15) "Go away! You are unclean!" people 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."

(lamentations 4:16) The LORD himself has scattered them; he no longer watches over them. The priests are shown no honor, the elders no favor.

Those who once carried out the work of God have now fallen under His judgment and become an object of ridicule to all people.

Finally, it speaks of the miserable end of Israel's leader, the king.

When Israel's king, Zedekiah, faced crisis, he sought help not from God but from worthless sources.

Only God could save Israel in its time of distress, but instead of trusting in Him, they relied on Egypt, which was considered powerful in the eyes of the world.

They thought that no matter how strong Babylon had become, it could never overcome Egypt, the traditional great power, and so they put their trust in Egypt.

(lamentations 4:17) Moreover, our eyes failed, looking in vain for help; from our towers we watched for a nation that could not save us.

(lamentations 4:18) People 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.

Instead of relying on the world, they should have listened to God's warning, repented, and returned to Him.

Egypt, in which Israel had placed its trust, was of no help at all.

No one could stop Babylon, for God had used Babylon as an instrument of His judgment upon Israel.

Babylon was like an eagle soaring in the heavens.

(lamentations 4:19) Our pursuers were swifter than eagles in the sky; they chased us over the mountains and lay in wait for us in the desert.

King Zedekiah of Judah, whom the people had relied on as their very lifeline, was completely destroyed.

(lamentations 4:20) 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.

The king is someone sent by God to protect the people.

However, when kings fail to fulfill their duty and lead the people down the path of destruction, God brings those kings to ruin.

Through this, God shows the people that their true King is not a human being, but God Himself.

Up to this point, Jeremiah had spoken of the downfall of Israel's people, its religious leaders, and its kings — but now he begins to sing of hope.

He speaks of the destruction of Edom.

He proclaims that judgment is drawing near to Edom.

Edom represents the nations that rejoiced over Israel's downfall.

The nations that rejoiced at the destruction of Zion will, in the end, face shame and destruction themselves.

But Zion will receive salvation.

(lamentations 4:21) Rejoice and be glad, Daughter 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.

(lamentations 4:22) Your punishment will end, Daughter Zion; he will not prolong your exile. But he will punish your sin, Daughter Edom, and expose your wickedness.

When the appointed time comes, God will bring an end to Israel's punishment and embrace them once again with His love.

He will comfort the remnant of Israel and pour out His grace upon them.

Beloved members of Church of Godly Dreams,

Jeremiah looked upon the devastated ruins of Jerusalem, recalling its former days and weeping in deep sorrow.

He declared that all this disaster came as a result of sin — the sins of the people, the prophets, the priests, and the kings — and that God's judgment fell upon them because of it.

Those who bore the responsibility of leading the people rightly before God — the prophets, priests, and kings — failed in their duties, bringing about this tragic outcome.

The people, too, instead of following God's word, pursued their own interests and listened only to what pleased their ears.

The result of sin was horrifying.

Because of sin, God departed from Judah, and Judah was destroyed.

The temple, where God once dwelled, was reduced to rubble.

The once-honored Israelites became as worthless as broken clay pots, and in their hunger, they fell into the misery of eating their own children.

The religious leaders, who had shed innocent blood, were cast out of the temple, wandering as objects of scorn among foreign nations.

The king, who relied on worldly powers rather than on God, failed to defend his people and was ultimately destroyed.

Throughout life, we are constantly tempted by sin.

Even though we know how dreadful the consequences of sin are, it is nearly impossible to overcome sin by our own strength — for the nature of sin already flows within us.

There is only one solution — **the blood of Jesus Christ.**

Only when we are covered by the blood of Jesus can we overcome the temptations of sin.

And when we are covered by His blood, every sin we have ever committed is washed away in an instant

.

May the precious blood of Jesus Christ cover each of us who worship here today. And by the power of the cross of Jesus Christ, may you live in victory over sin — in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.