

Digging Up Our Idols

Lamentations 4: 1-2, 6, 12-14, 17, 20-22

Jeremiah 2: 13

After the intensity of Lamentations 3 ...

- Jeremiah calmly compares Jerusalem's current desolation with its former glory

How the gold has lost its luster,
the fine gold become dull!

The sacred gems are scattered
at every street corner. (Lam. 4: 1)

- He focuses on the personal devastation and loss

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!

Their princes were brighter than snow
and whiter than milk, ...
But now they are blacker than soot;
they are not recognized in the streets.

(Lam. 4: 2, 7-8)

He arrives at this conclusion ...

Those killed by the sword are better off
than those who die of famine; (4: 9a)

... and utters a most disturbing sentence

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

What caused all of this ?

- SIN
- IDOLATRY
- Lament points out things we've placed too much hope in
- Hardship reveals our idols

Idol ?!

- ◆ An object we trust that replaces God
- ◆ “... an idol ... is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. ... anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living.” – Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*

Digging up our idols

- Destructiveness of Sin
- Deceitfulness of Sin
- Restoration from Sin

Destructiveness of Sin

- Sin causes chaos and destruction
- "For the **wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6: 23)
- " ... **sin**, when it is full-grown, **gives birth to death**." (James 1: 14)

The sin of Judah

¹¹ Has a nation ever changed its gods?
(Yet they are not gods at all.)

But my people have exchanged their
glorious God for worthless idols.

¹³ “My people have committed two sins:
They have forsaken me,
the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”

(Jeremiah 2: 11, 13)

3 types of drinkable water

- Spring (or living) water
- Underground (or well) water
- Stored (or collected) water in cistern
- “My people have committed two sins:
They have forsaken me,
the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”
(Jeremiah 2: 13)

Deceitfulness of Sin or ... Lies I embrace

- ❑ It won't end this way for me
- ❑ I've got this under control
- ❑ I know when to stop
- ❑ God will understand why I've got to do this ...

Jerusalem's destruction from God's perspective

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

(Lamentations 4: 6)

“If you, Israel, will return, then return to me,”
declares the LORD.

“If you put your detestable idols out of my sight
and no longer go astray, ... (Jer. 4: 1)

³ This is what the LORD says to the people of
Judah and to Jerusalem:

“Break up your unplowed ground
and do not sow among thorns.

⁴ Circumcise yourselves to the LORD,
circumcise your hearts, ...

or my wrath will flare up and burn like fire
because of the evil you have done—

burn with no one to quench it. (Jer. 4: 3-4)

Judah trusted in their wealth

How the gold has lost its luster!

Even the finest gold has become dull.

The sacred gemstones

lie scattered in the streets! (Lam. 4: 1; NLT)

The people who once ate the richest foods

now beg in the streets for anything they can get.

Those who once wore the finest clothes

now search the garbage dumps for food.

(Lam. 4: 5; NLT)

Depended on their strength

Not a king in all the earth—
no one in all the world—
would have believed that an enemy
could march through the gates of Jerusalem.
(Lam. 4: 12; NLT)

- ❑ Your strengths are God's gifts to you ...
for His purpose and glory
- ❑ Don't turn them into idols

... their political allies

We looked in vain for our allies
to come and save us,
but we were looking to nations
that could not help us. (Lam. 4: 17; NLT)

... their king

Our king—the LORD's anointed, the very life of our nation—

was caught in their snares.

We had thought that his shadow

would protect us against any nation on earth!

(Lam. 4: 20; NLT)

... **their spiritual leaders**

Not a king in all the earth—
no one in all the world—
would have believed that an enemy
could march through the gates of Jerusalem.

¹³ Yet it happened because of
the sins of her prophets
and the sins of her priests,
who defiled the city
by shedding innocent blood.

(Lam. 4: 12-13; NLT)

“Even the priests and prophets
are ungodly, wicked men.
I have seen their despicable acts
right here in my own Temple,”
says the LORD. (Jeremiah 23: 11; NLT)

This is what the LORD ... says to his people:

“Do not listen to these prophets when they
prophecy to you,

filling you with futile hopes.

They are making up everything they say.

They do not speak for the LORD!

They keep saying to those who despise my word,

‘Don’t worry! The LORD says you will have
peace!’

And to those who stubbornly follow their own
desires,

they say, ‘No harm will come your way!’

(Jeremiah 23: 16-17; NLT)

Judah's idols dug up

- ❑ wealth (4: 1, 5)
 - ❑ power/strength (4: 12)
 - ❑ political allies & king (4: 17, 20)
 - ❑ spiritual leaders (4: 13)
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- ❑ What idols would be dug up from the rubble of our lives?

Meet two (hypothetical) couples ...

- ❑ Couple 1: constantly fighting
- ❑ idol: wealth; success; careers; kids
- ❑ Couple 2: looks relatively OK; very loving
- ❑ avoid quarrels; try to keep the other happy
- ❑ idol: their spouse

What's your idol?

“For my people have done two evil things:
They have abandoned me—
the fountain of living water.

And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns
that can hold no water at all! (Jer. 2: 13; NLT)

- Destructiveness of Sin
- Deceitfulness of Sin
- Restoration from Sin

Restoration from sin

Are you rejoicing in the land of Uz,
O people of Edom?

But you, too, must drink from the cup of
the LORD's anger.

You, too, will be stripped naked in your
drunkenness.

O beautiful Jerusalem, your punishment will end;
you will soon return from exile.

But Edom, your punishment is just beginning;
soon your many sins will be exposed.

(Lam. 4: 21-22; NLT)

Who is “Edom”?

- ❑ Remember Jacob & Esau?
- ❑ From Esau came the people of Edom
- ❑ Israel’s oldest enemy
- ❑ always trying to bring about the destruction of Israel
- ❑ helped the Babylonians during the siege of Jerusalem (Obadiah 1: 11-14; Ezekiel 35; Psalm 137)

O LORD, remember what the Edomites did
on the day the armies of Babylon captured
Jerusalem.

“Destroy it!” they yelled.

“Level it to the ground!” (Psalm 137: 7; NLT)

You should not have gloated
when they exiled your relatives to distant lands.
... You should not have plundered the land of
Israel
when they were suffering such calamity. ...
You should not have stood at the crossroads,
killing those who tried to escape.
You should not have captured the survivors
and handed them over in their terrible time of
trouble. (Obadiah 1: 12-14; NLT)

In the midst of complete devastation ...

- ❑ God promises to judge Judah's enemy – Edom
- ❑ God promises an end of the exile and Judah's future restoration

O beautiful Jerusalem, your punishment will end;
you will soon return from exile.

But Edom, your punishment is just beginning;
soon your many sins will be exposed.

(Lam. 4: 22; NLT)

When life becomes so challenging ...

- ❑ hope comes from what we know to be true about God despite the circumstances we're in (Lam. 3)
- ❑ hope comes from realizing that sin does not have the final word for God's people (Lam. 4)

