

Lamentations 2:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!

Analysis

The chapter opens with God's active judgment: "How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger" (yakib be-apo, יָעַיְב בְּאָפֹה). The verb akib means to darken or cover with clouds, suggesting obscured vision and lost glory. In Exodus, God's cloud signified presence and guidance (Exodus 13:21-22), but here it represents wrath. When God's people forsake Him, His presence becomes terrifying rather than comforting. The phrase "cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel" employs striking imagery. The Hebrew hishlikh (הִשְׁלִיך), "cast down, hurled") conveys violent action. "Beauty of Israel" (tiferet Yisrael) refers to the temple, the Davidic throne, or Jerusalem itself—all sources of national pride now thrown down. This reverses Israel's calling to be exalted among nations (Deuteronomy 26:19). Most sobering is the final statement: "remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger" (lo-zachar hadom raglaw). God's "footstool" refers to the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies (1 Chronicles 28:2, Psalm 99:5, 132:7). Even this sacred object finds no protection when God judges sin. This demonstrates that religious institutions cannot substitute for obedient hearts. External forms without internal reality provide no security against divine wrath.

Historical Context

The cloud imagery contrasts with Israel's Exodus experience. At Sinai, the cloud represented God's glory dwelling among His people (Exodus 24:15-18). When the tabernacle was dedicated, God's cloud filled it (Exodus 40:34-38). Solomon's temple dedication saw the same phenomenon (1 Kings 8:10-11). But Ezekiel 10:18-19 and 11:22-23 describe God's glory departing the temple before Jerusalem's destruction—the cloud of presence became a cloud of judgment. Archaeological excavations confirm the temple's destruction. Layers of ash and burnt debris from 586 BC are found throughout Jerusalem's ancient city. The Babylonians systematically dismantled and burned everything of value (2 Kings 25:9, 13-17). Psalm 74:4-7 laments enemies defiling the sanctuary, chopping wood fixtures like foresters, and burning it to the ground. The treatment of the ark remains mysterious. 2 Chronicles 35:3 mentions it during Josiah's reign (640-609 BC), but no later biblical reference appears. Jewish tradition suggests Jeremiah hid it (2 Maccabees 2:4-8), though this is uncertain. The ark's absence from the second temple (built 520-516 BC) symbolized that full restoration awaited the Messiah. Hebrews 9:11-12 shows Christ's work renders the earthly ark obsolete—He entered the true heavenly Holy of Holies.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the transformation of God's presence-cloud into a judgment-cloud illustrate the terrifying reality of experiencing God's holiness apart from covenant faithfulness?

2. What does it mean that even the ark—God's footstool—received no special protection during judgment?
3. In what ways might modern Christians wrongly trust religious institutions or practices (church attendance, rituals, heritage) as substitutes for genuine heart obedience?
4. How does Hebrews 10:19-22 show that Christ has removed the terror of God's holiness for believers, granting us confident access to the very throne Jerusalem lost?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	וְ	בְּתִ	צִיּ	וְ
אֵיכָה	עַל יְבָ	אַתָּה	בַּת	צִיּוֹן
אַפּוֹן	אָדָנִי	אַתָּה	הַדָּעָתְךָ	הַדָּעָתְךָ
אֵיכָה	אָדָנִי	אַתָּה	בַּת	צִיּוֹן
covered	in his anger	How hath the Lord	the daughter	of Zion
H349	H5743	H639	H853	H1323
and cast down	from heaven	unto the earth	the beauty	of Israel
H7993	H8064	H776	H8597	H3478
רָאָה	תִּפְאָה	רְתָתָה	וְיִשְׂרָאֵל	וְיִשְׂרָאֵל
and remembered	not his footstool	the beauty	of Israel	of Zion
H2142	H1916	H7272	H3117	H639
אַפּוֹן	בַּיּוֹם	בַּיּוֹם	אַפּוֹן	בַּיּוֹם
in his anger	in the day	in the day	in his anger	in the day

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 132:7 (Parallel theme): We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.

1 Chronicles 28:2 (References Lord): Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building:

Psalms 99:5 (References Lord): Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

Matthew 11:23 (Parallel theme): And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Joel 2:2 (Parallel theme): A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

Ezekiel 30:18 (Parallel theme): At Tehaphnehes also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt: and the pomp of her strength shall cease in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity.

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