

# Lamentations 2:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?

## Analysis

Jerusalem's humiliation becomes public spectacle: "All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem" (safqu aleikh kapayim kol-ovrei derek sharqu vayani'u rosham). Clapping hands, hissing, and head-wagging were ancient gestures of contempt and mockery (Job 27:23, Psalm 44:14, Nahum 3:19). What was once admired is now scorned. The mockers' taunt follows: "saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?" This ironic question recalls Psalm 48:2 and 50:2, which celebrated Jerusalem's beauty and Zion's perfection. The Hebrew *kelilat yofi* (קְלִילַת יוֹפִי) means "perfection of beauty"—flawless beauty. *Mesos kol-ha'arets* means "joy of all the earth." These titles described Jerusalem's role as the place where God's glory dwelt and nations would stream to learn His ways (Isaiah 2:2-4). But judgment transformed glory to shame. When God's people fail their calling, the world mocks not just them but the God they represent (Romans 2:24, citing Isaiah 52:5). This public disgrace serves as warning: privileged position brings greater responsibility and, if squandered, greater judgment (Amos 3:2, Luke 12:48). Yet even in mockery, God's redemptive purposes continue—the depth of fall highlights the magnitude of grace needed, which only Christ provides.

## Historical Context

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Jerusalem held unique status in the ancient Near East. As Israel's capital and the site of Solomon's temple, it represented the earthly dwelling of the Creator God. The temple's magnificence impressed even pagan rulers (1 Kings 10:4-5). Pilgrims from all tribes traveled there for festivals. Psalm 122 celebrates the joy of going to "the house of the LORD." When Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, surrounding nations reacted with a mixture of shock and gloating. Obadiah 1:11-12 condemns Edom for rejoicing at Judah's calamity: "thou stoodest on the other side...thou shouldest not have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction." Moab, Ammon, and Philistia similarly celebrated (Ezekiel 25:3, 6, 8, 15), viewing Judah's fall as vindication against a nation that claimed special divine favor. The mockery cut deep because it questioned God's power and faithfulness. Pagan nations interpreted Jerusalem's fall as proof that Marduk (Babylon's god) was stronger than Yahweh. Psalm 79:10 and 115:2 lament: "Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?" The prophets consistently maintained that Judah's defeat demonstrated not God's weakness but His justice—He judges His own people more severely than the nations (Amos 3:2, 1 Peter 4:17).

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How should the transformation from 'perfection of beauty' to object of mockery warn us against spiritual pride and presumption on God's patience?
2. What does the public nature of Jerusalem's disgrace teach about how covenant unfaithfulness affects God's reputation among unbelievers?
3. In what ways does Christ restore believers to be the 'city on a hill' (Matthew 5:14) that Jerusalem failed to be?

4. How can we maintain faithful witness even when facing ridicule, remembering that Jesus endured ultimate mockery for our sake (Matthew 27:39-44)?

## Interlinear Text

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וּבְעוֹ שָׁרְקוּ	דָּהָךְ	עַל בְּרִי	כָּל	כַּפַּיִם	עַל יָדָם	סָפְקוּ וּ
and wag	at thee	All that pass	H3605	their hands	H5921	by clap
H5128	H1870	H5674		H3709		H5606
הֵעִיר	הֲזֵאת	יְרוּשָׁלַם	בִּת	עַל	רֹאשָׁ	הֵם
saying Is this the city	H2063	of Jerusalem	at the daughter	H5921	their head	
H5892		H3389	H1323		H7218	
הָאָרֶץ:	לְכָל	מִשׁ וְשִׁ	יִפִּי	כָּל יִלְת	שִׁיאָמְרוּ	
of the whole earth	H3605	The joy	of beauty	The perfection	that men call	
H776		H4885	H3308	H3632	H559	

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 48:2** (Parallel theme): Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

**Jeremiah 18:16** (Parallel theme): To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.

**Psalms 50:2** (Parallel theme): Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

**Jeremiah 19:8** (Parallel theme): And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof.

**Ezekiel 25:6** (Parallel theme): For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel;

**Isaiah 37:22** (References Jerusalem): This is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

**Isaiah 64:11** (Parallel theme): Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.

**Psalms 22:7** (Parallel theme): All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

**Zephaniah 2:15** (Parallel theme): This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.