

Lamentations 4:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Analysis

The most horrific verse: "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people" (yedei nashim rakhaniyot bishlu yaldeihen hayu le-varoth lamo be-shever bat-ami, נְשָׁיִם רָחָמָנִיּוֹת בְּשַׁלּוּ יָלְדֵיכֶן הַיּוֹ לְבָרֹת לִמּוֹ בְּשָׁבֵר בַּת־עַמִּי). The term rachamaniyot (רָחָמָנִיּוֹת, "pitiful, compassionate") comes from the same root as God's compassion—making the contrast unbearable. Women naturally tender and maternal boiled their own children for food. This literally fulfilled Deuteronomy 28:53-57's curse: 'thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and thy daughters...in the siege.' Leviticus 26:29 threatened the same: 'ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.' This represents ultimate covenant curse—the complete inversion of natural order, maternal love becoming horrific necessity. It demonstrates sin's trajectory: what seems impossible (eating one's children) becomes reality when covenant protection is removed and judgment unfolds fully.

Historical Context

This wasn't hyperbole or metaphor but historical reality. 2 Kings 6:24-29 records an earlier instance during Samaria's siege by Syria: two women agreed to eat their sons, but after consuming one, the other hid her son, leading to public outcry. Josephus records similar events during Jerusalem's AD 70 siege by Rome: a wealthy woman named Mary killed, cooked, and ate her infant, offering half to

soldiers who discovered the act. The extremity of these accounts confirms that sustained siege warfare created conditions so desperate that maternal instinct was overridden by starvation. Archaeological evidence from ancient sieges shows signs of extreme food deprivation—gnawed bones, evidence of consuming normally inedible materials. The fulfillment of Deuteronomy 28's curse wasn't divine cruelty but covenant faithfulness—God always does what He promises, whether blessing or curse. This horrible reality shows why treating God's warnings lightly is foolish and dangerous.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the literal fulfillment of Deuteronomy 28:53-57 demonstrate that God's warnings must be taken with utmost seriousness?
2. What does this ultimate breakdown of natural motherly love teach about sin's power to corrupt and destroy every good thing when judgment falls?
3. How should awareness of judgment's severity affect our evangelism urgency and our own pursuit of holiness?

Interlinear Text

קַיְ 1	לִלְדִּים	בְּשָׁל 1	בְּקַמְתִּ נִי זֹת	נְשִׁים	אִז 1
The hands	women	of the pitiful	have sodden	their own children	H1961
H3027	H802	H7362	H1310	H3206	
לְבָרֹות	לְמִזְבֵּחַ	בְּשָׁל בָּר	בַּת	עֲמָדִים:	
they were their meat	H0	in the destruction	of the daughter	of my people	
H1262		H7667	H1323	H5971	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 49:15 (Parallel theme): Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

Lamentations 2:20 (Parallel theme): Behold, O LORD, and consider to whom thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit, and children of a span long? shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?

Jeremiah 19:9 (Parallel theme): And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.

Ezekiel 5:10 (Parallel theme): Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds.

Leviticus 26:29 (Parallel theme): And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.

Lamentations 4:3 (Parallel theme): Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

Lamentations 3:48 (Parallel theme): Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.