

Lamentations 4:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.

Analysis

The siege's terror described: "**They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.**" The Hebrew tsadu tse'adeinu mileches birchevotenu karav kitsenu male'u yameinu ki va kitsenu depicts inescapable doom. Tsadu tse'adeinu (צָדוּ צָעַדְינּוּ, "they hunted our steps") describes enemy surveillance of every movement. Mileches birchevotenu (מִלְכָת בְּרַחֲבוֹתֵינוּ, "from going in our streets") indicates inability to move freely even in one's own city.

"Our end is near" (karav kitsenu, קָרָב לִקְצָנָת, "our days are fulfilled" (male'u yameinu, מַלְאִי יָמִינָת), and "our end is come" (ki va kitsenu (כִּי בָא לִקְצָנָת, "end") use threefold repetition emphasizing certainty and immediacy of doom. Kets (קֵץ, "end") appears twice, and yamim (יָמִינָת, "days") being "fulfilled" or "completed" (male'u, מַלְאִי) indicates the appointed time of judgment has arrived.

Theologically, this verse reflects the covenant curse of Deuteronomy 28:65-67: "Among these nations shalt thou find no ease...And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning!" When God's patience ends, the "end" comes swiftly and certainly.

Historical Context

During the final siege (588-586 BC), Babylonian forces surrounded Jerusalem completely. Anyone attempting to leave was captured or killed. 2 Kings 25:4 describes the escape attempt: "the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls...and the king went the way toward the plain." But verse 5 continues: "the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho." Even the king couldn't escape.

The phrase "cannot go in our streets" reflects conditions during the 18-month siege. Famine was so severe that venturing into streets was dangerous (Lamentations 2:11-12, 4:9-10). Babylonian snipers or raiding parties made any outdoor movement deadly. Jeremiah 37:21 notes that daily bread rations continued until "all the bread in the city were spent"—at which point starvation accelerated death.

The recognition "our end is come" reflects the moment when hope finally died. When the wall was breached on the ninth day of the fourth month (2 Kings 25:3-4), everyone knew Jerusalem's end had arrived. No more hoping for Egyptian relief, no more believing God would miraculously intervene as He had against Sennacherib. The appointed time of judgment—70 years of desolation prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11)—had come. Divine patience was exhausted; the end arrived.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does being unable to 'go in our streets' illustrate the comprehensive control judgment brings over every aspect of life?

2. What does the threefold emphasis ('end is near,' 'days fulfilled,' 'end is come') teach about the certainty and finality of divine judgment?
3. In what ways does this verse's urgency challenge our tendency to presume on God's patience and delay?
4. How should the reality that appointed ends do arrive affect both Christian vigilance and evangelistic urgency?

Interlinear Text

צַדִּים	בְּרַחֲבָתִים	מִלְאָכָת	צָעִידִים	בְּ	לְאָנוֹתָה	מְלָאָה
They hunt	our steps	H1980	in our streets	is near	for our end	are fulfilled
H6679	H6806		H7339	H7126	H7093	H4390
our days	is come	H3588	לְאָנוֹתָה	בְּ	לְאָנוֹתָה	מְלָאָה
H3117	H935				H7093	

Additional Cross-References

Amos 8:2 (Parallel theme): And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

Jeremiah 16:16 (Parallel theme): Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

Lamentations 3:52 (Parallel theme): Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause.