

Lamentations 4:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.

Analysis

A comparative judgment: "For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom" (vayigdal avon bat-ami me-chatat Sedom, וַיִּגְדַּל עוֹן בַּת־אֲמִי מִחַטַּאת סְדוֹם). Sodom's destruction was sudden—"that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her" (hahefekhah ke-mo rega velo-khalu vah yadayim). Genesis 19:24-25 records Sodom's instant annihilation by fire and brimstone. No prolonged siege, no gradual suffering. But Jerusalem endured prolonged agony: 18-month siege, starvation, watching children die slowly, then destruction. The comparison suggests that quick death is more merciful than slow suffering. Theologically, greater privilege brings greater judgment (Luke 12:48, Amos 3:2). Sodom never had Torah, temple, or prophets. Judah possessed all these yet still rebelled—making guilt greater and judgment more severe. The verse also implies that Jerusalem's sin exceeded even Sodom's notorious wickedness, which Jesus confirmed in Matthew 11:23-24: Capernaum (exposed to Christ's miracles) will face worse judgment than Sodom.

Historical Context

Sodom became the biblical archetype of total divine judgment. Genesis 18-19 records its destruction. Ezekiel 16:48-50 details Sodom's sins: pride, excess bread (abundance), prosperous ease, refusal to help poor and needy, haughtiness,

abominations. These sins also characterized Jerusalem. Isaiah 1:10 and 3:9 explicitly compare Judah to Sodom. Jeremiah 23:14 says Jerusalem's prophets made the nation 'as Sodom.' The rabbis developed the principle that judgment severity correlates with privilege and opportunity. Those who know God's will and reject it face harsher consequences than those who never knew. Hebrews 10:28-29 applies this: if violating Moses' law brought death, 'how much sorer punishment' shall those deserve who reject Christ? The comparison also highlights judgment forms. Sodom: instant incineration. Jerusalem: prolonged siege, famine, warfare, exile. God's judgments vary but all serve His purposes. Sometimes quick death is mercy; sometimes extended suffering serves redemptive discipline.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the principle that 'greater privilege brings greater judgment' affect how we view our responsibilities as those with access to Scripture, gospel, and Holy Spirit?
2. What does Jerusalem's judgment being worse than Sodom's teach about the danger of religious heritage and knowledge unaccompanied by obedience?
3. In what ways might prolonged suffering serve redemptive purposes that quick judgment cannot?

Interlinear Text

וְגָדֹל is greater H1431	עוֹן For the punishment of the iniquity H5771	בֵּת of the daughter H1323	עַמִּי of my people H5971	
מִחַטַּת אֵת than the punishment H2403	חַטֹּאת סְדוֹם of the sin of Sodom H5467	הַנִּפְּחוֹתָהּ that was overthrown H2015	כְּמוֹ H3644	כְּגַעַץ as in a moment H7281
וְלֹא H3808	נִשְׁתָּמְרָה stayed H2342	וְלֹא H0	יָדַיִם: and no hands H3027	

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 19:25 (Parallel theme): And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

Luke 10:12 (Parallel theme): But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.