

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO LAMENTATIONS 4

The prophet begins this chapter with a complaint of the ill usage of the dear children of God, and precious sons of Zion, (^{<2006>}Lamentations 4:1,2); relates the dreadful effects of the famine during the siege of Jerusalem, (^{<2008>}Lamentations 4:3-10); the taking and destruction of that city he imputes to the wrath of God; and represents it as incredible to the kings and inhabitants of the earth, (^{<2011>}Lamentations 4:11,12); the causes of which were the sins of the prophets, priests, and people, (^{<2013>}Lamentations 4:13-16); expresses the vain hopes they once had, but now were given up entirely, their king being taken, (^{<2017>}Lamentations 4:17-20); and the chapter is concluded with a prophecy of the destruction of the Edomites, and of the return of the Jews from captivity, (^{<2021>}Lamentations 4:21,22).

Ver. 1. *How is the gold become dim!* etc.] Or “covered”^{f98}; or hid with rust, dust, or dirt; so that it can scarcely be discerned:

[how] is the most fine gold changed! this may be literally true of the gold of the temple; and so the Targum calls it

“the gold of the house of the sanctuary;”

with which that was overlaid, and many things in it, (^{<1021>}1 Kings 6:21,22); and was sadly sullied and tarnished with the burning of the temple, and the rubbish of it: its brightness was lost, and its colour changed; but though there may be an allusion to that, it is to be figuratively understood of the people of God; for what is here expressed in parabolical phrases, as Aben Ezra observes, is in (^{<2002>}Lamentations 4:2) explained in proper and literal ones: godly and gracious men, there called the precious sons of Zion, are comparable to gold, even the most fine gold; partly because of their habit and dress; gold of Ophir; clothing of wrought gold; the rich robe of Christ’s righteousness; which, for its brightness and splendour, is like the finest gold; and is as lasting and durable as that; and in which the saints look like a mass of pure gold, (^{<1980>}Psalm 45:9,13); and partly because of the graces of the Spirit in them, which are like gold for their purity, especially when tried; for their value, and the enriching nature of them, and

their duration; particularly the graces of faith, hope, love, humility, which are like rows of jewels, and chains of gold, and as ornamental as they; (see ^{<2010>}Song of Solomon 1:10,11 ^{<4100>}1 Peter 1:7 ^{<4188>}Revelation 3:18); as also because of the doctrines of grace received by them, which are more to be desired than gold, than fine gold; and are better than thousands of gold and silver, by reason of their intrinsic worth and value; for their purity and brightness, being tried and purified, and because of their duration, (^{<1990>}Psalm 19:10 119:72 ^{<4182>}1 Corinthians 3:12); as well as on account of the riches of grace and glory they are possessed of, and entitled to: now this, in either of the senses of it, cannot be lost as to substance, only become dim; may lose its brightness and glory, and like gold change its colour, but not its nature; and; this may be the case of good men, comparable to it; when there is a decline in them, with respect to the exercise of grace; faith in Christ and his righteousness is low, hope not lively, and love waxen cold; when there is a veil drawn over the Gospel, a great opposition to it, and a departure from it; or the doctrines of it are not so clearly and consistently preached; and when there is a failure in a holy walk, and conversation becoming it; all which is matter of lamentation:

the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street; in the literal sense it may regard the costly stones of the temple, which, when that was destroyed, not only lay in heaps; but many of them, at least, were separated and scattered about, and carried into every corner of the city, and the streets of it, and there lay exposed, neglected, and trampled upon; (see ^{<1157>}1 Kings 5:17 ^{<4181>}Mark 13:1,2); but, in the figurative sense, it designs the people of God; who, though they are taken out of the common quarry and pit of mankind, and are by nature as common stones; yet by the Spirit and grace of God are made living and lively ones, and are hewn and fitted for the spiritual building the church; where they are laid, and are as the stones of a crown, as jewels and precious stones; but when there are animosities, contentions, and divisions among them, so that they disunite, and are scattered from one another, their case is like these stones of the sanctuary; and which is to be lamented. It is by some Jewish writers ^{f99} interpreted of great personages, as princes, and great men of the earth.

Ver. 2. *The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold*, etc.] This explains what is meant in (^{<2301>}Lamentations 4:1); by gold, fine gold, and stones of the sanctuary; not Josiah and his sons, as some Jewish interpreters; but all the sons of Zion, or children of God; not the inhabitants of Zion literally, but spiritually; (see ^{<3013>}Zechariah 9:13 ^{<1992>}Psalm 149:2).

Zion is the church; her sons are her spiritual seed and offspring that are born of her, she being the mother of them all, and born in her, by means of the word; and brought up by her, through the ordinances, and so are regenerate persons; and these the sons of God: and who are “precious”, not in themselves, being of the fallen race of Adam; of the earth, earthly, as he was; of the same mass and lump with the rest of mankind; in no wise better than others, by nature; and have no intrinsic worth and value in them, but what comes by and from the grace of God; nor are they precious in their own esteem, and much less in the esteem of the men of the world; but in the eye of God, and of his son Jesus Christ, and of the blessed Spirit, and in the opinion of other saints; (see ^{-1916B}Psalm 16:3 116:15 ^{-236B}Isaiah 43:4); in what sense these are comparable to fine gold, (see Gill on ^{-230B}Lamentations 4:1”);

how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! they are indeed earthen vessels with respect to their bodies, frail, weak, and mortal; but they are the work of God’s hands, even as creatures, and particularly as new creatures, and are a curious piece of his workmanship, and so valuable, and especially by him, who is as tender and as careful of them as the apple of his eye; and yet these are greatly disesteemed by carnal men, are reckoned as the faith of the world, and the offscouring of all things; as earthen vessels, fit for no use but common or dishonourable ones, or to be broke in pieces, and rendered useless and contemptible: (see ⁻¹⁸¹²Psalm 31:12).

Ver. 3. *Even the sea monsters draw out the breast,* etc.] Which some interpret of dragons; others of seals, or sea calves; but it is best to understand it of whales, as the word is rendered in (^{-002B}Genesis 1:21); and elsewhere: and Bochart ^{f100} has proved, out of various writers, that these have breasts and milk; but that their breasts, or however their paps, are not manifest, but are hid as in cases, and must be drawn out: and so Jarchi observes that they draw their breasts out of a case, for their breasts have a covering, which they uncover: so Ben Melech. Aristotle ^{f101} says, that whales, as the dolphin, sea calf, and balaena, have breasts or paps, and milk, which he makes to be certain species of the whale; and each of these, he elsewhere says, have milk, and suckle their young: the dolphin and sturgeon, he observes ^{f102} have milk, and are sucked; and so the sea calf, he says ^{f103}, lets out milk as a sheep, and has two breasts, and is sucked by its young, as four footed beasts are. Agreeably to which Aelianus ^{f104} relates, that the female dolphins have paps like women, and suckle their young,

with great plenty of milk; and the balaena, he says ^{f105}, is a creature like a dolphin, and has milk. And Pliny, speaking of the dolphins, observes ^{f106}, that they bring forth their “whelps”, and so the young of this creature are called here in the next clause in the Hebrew text ^{f107}, and nourish them with their breasts, as the balaena; and of the sea calves the same writer says ^{f108} they feed their young with their paps; but the paps of these creatures are not manifest, as those of four footed beasts, as Aristotle observes; but are like two channels or pipes, out of which the milk flows, and the young are suckled;

they give suck to their young ones; as they do, when they are hungry; which is mentioned, as an aggravation of the case of the Jewish women, with respect to their behaviour towards their children, by reason of the famine, during the siege of Jerusalem; which here, and in the following verses, is described in the sad effects of it; and which had a further accomplishment at the destruction of the same city by the Romans: now, though the monsters suckled their young when hungry, yet these women did not suckle theirs;

the daughter of my people [is become] cruel; or, is “unto a cruel one” ^{f109}: that is, is changed unto a cruel one, or is like unto one, and behaves as such, though of force and necessity: the meaning is, that the Jewish women, though before tenderhearted mothers, yet, by reason of the famine, having no milk in their breasts, could give none to their children, and so acted as if they were cruel to them; nay, in fact, instead of feeding them, they fed upon them, (^{<3040>}Lamentations 4:10);

like the ostriches in the wilderness; which lay their eggs, and leave them in places easily to be crushed and broken; and when they have any young ones, they are hardened against them, as if they were none of theirs, (^{<3093>}Job 39:13-17); and this seemed now to be the case of these women; or, “like the owls”, as the word is sometimes rendered; and which also leave their eggs, and for want of food will eat their young, as those women did. So Ben Melech says, it is a bird which dwells in the wilderness, and causes a voice of hooping to be heard.

Ver. 4. *The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst*, etc.] Through want of the milk of the breast, which is both food and drink unto it:

the young children ask bread; of their parents as usual, not knowing how the case was, that there was a famine in the city; these are such as were more grown, were weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts, and lived on other food, and were capable of asking for it:

[and] no man breaketh [it] unto them: distributes unto them, or gives them a piece of bread; not father, friend, or any other person; it not being in their power to do it, they having none for themselves.

Ver. 5. *They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets*, etc.] That were brought up in the king's palace, or in the houses of noblemen; or, however, born of parents rich and wealthy, and had been used to good living, and had fared sumptuously and deliciously every day, were now wandering about in the streets in the most forlorn and distressed condition, seeking for food of any sort, but could find none to satisfy their hunger; and so, as the Vulgate Latin version renders it, perished in the ways or streets:

they that were brought up in scarlet: in dyed garments, as Jarchi; clothed with scarlet coloured ones, as was the manner of the richer and better sort of people, (~~1821~~ Proverbs 31:21); or, "brought up upon scarlet"^{f110}; upon scarlet carpets, on which they used to sit and eat their food, as is the custom of the eastern people to this day: these

embrace dunghills, are glad of them, and with the greatest eagerness rake into them, in order to find something to feed upon, though ever so base and vile; or to sit and lie down upon. Aben Ezra interprets it of their being cast here when dead, and there was none to bury them.

Ver. 6. *For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people*, etc.] In the long siege of their city, and the evils that attended it, especially the sore famine:

is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom; which was destroyed at once by fire from heaven: or it may be rendered, "the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom"^{f111}; though the men of Sodom were great sinners, the Jews were greater, their sins being more aggravated; to this agrees the Targum, which renders the word "sin", and paraphrases the words following thus,

"and there dwelt not in her prophets to prophesy unto her, and turn her by repentance;"

as the Jews had, and therefore their sin was the greater; both senses are true, and the one is the foundation of the other; but the first seems best to agree with what follows:

that was overthrown as in a moment; by a shower of fire from heaven, which consumed it at once; whereas the destruction of Jerusalem was a lingering one, through a long and tedious siege; the inhabitants were gradually wasted and consumed by famine, pestilence, and sword, and so their punishment greater than Sodom's:

and no hand stayed on her; that is, on Sodom; the hand of God was immediately upon her, and dispatched her at once, but not the hands of men; as the hands of the Chaldeans were upon the Jews, afflicting and distressing them a long time, which made their ease the worse.

Ver. 7. *Her Nazarites were purer than snow*, etc.] Such who separated themselves by a vow to the Lord, and abstained from drinking wine and strong drink, and by a moderate diet, and often washing themselves, as well as taking great care of their hair, appeared very neat and comely, like snow, without any spot or blemish. Some think such as were separated from others in dignity, very honourable persons, the sons of nobles, are meant, since the word has the signification of a "crown", and interpret it, her princes; Jarchi makes mention of this sense, and rejects it; but it is received by many: and the meaning is, that her young noblemen, who were well fed, and neatly dressed, looked as pure and as beautiful as the driven snow:

they were whiter than milk; this intends the same thing, expressed by another metaphor:

they were more ruddy in body than rubies; or rather "than precious stones"; and particularly "than pearls", which Bochart^{f12} proves at large are designed by the word used, which are white, and not red; and the word should be rendered, "clearer" or "whiter than pearls", as it is by Lyra and others^{f13}; and the word in the Arabic language signifies white and clear^{f14}, as pearls are; and so the phrase is expressive of the beauty and comeliness of these persons: and Ludolphus^{f15} says, that in the Ethiopic language it signifies "beautiful"; and he translates the whole, "they were more beautiful than pearls"; denoting the clearness of their skins, and the goodness of their complexion:

their polishing [was] of sapphire; or “their cutting, sapphire”^{f116}; they were as beautiful as if they had been cut out of sapphire, and polished; which is a very precious stone, and looks very beautiful; so smooth were their skins. The Targum is,

“their face or countenance is as sapphire.”

Braunius^{f117} thinks the word used signifies the veins full of blood, which variously intersect the flesh like sapphirine rivers; and that the sense of the words is,

“their bodies were white like snow and milk, yea, shining like pearls (or red in the cheeks, lips, etc. like coral^{f118}); veins full of blood running between like sapphire, of a most agreeable sky colour; which is, a true description of a most fair and beautiful body.”

(see ²¹⁵⁴Song of Solomon 5:14). All this is to be understood of them before the famine, but, when that came upon them, then they were as follow:

Ver. 8. *Their visage is blacker than a coal*, etc.] Or, “darker than blackness”; or, “dark through blackness”^{f119}; by reason of the famine, and because of grief and trouble for themselves and their friends, which changed their complexions, countenances, and skins; they that looked before as pure as snow, as white as milk, as clear as pearls, as polished as sapphire, now as black as charcoal, as blackness itself:

they are not known in the streets; not taken notice of in a distinguished manner; no respect shown them as they walk the streets, as used to be; nay, their countenances were so altered, and their apparel so sordid, as not to be known by their friends, when they met them in public:

their skin cleaveth to their bones; have nothing but skin and bone, who used to be plump and fat:

it is withered, it is become like a stick; the skin wrinkled and shrivelled up, the flesh being gone; and the bone became like a stick, or a dry piece of wood, its moisture and marrow being dried up.

Ver. 9. *[They that be] slain with the sword are better than [they that be] slain with hunger*, etc.] Not that they are better with respect to their state after death, but with respect to their manner of dying. They that were slain by the sword of the Chaldeans, as many were, either upon the walls, or in sallies out against the enemy, these felt less pain, and had less terror of

mind in dying, than those did who perished by famine; they died a lingering death, as it were by inches, and were in continual pain of body and uneasiness of mind:

for these pine away, stricken through for [want of] the fruits of the field: that is, those that died by famine gradually wasted or “flowed” away, their fluid parts by degrees went off; and though they were not run through with the sword, they were stabbed by famine, and were so distressed in body and mind as if a sword had pierced them; not having the fruits of the field, the corn and the wine, to support nature, and keep them alive. Jarchi’s note is,

“they that were slain with hunger were inflated at the smell of the fruits of the field, when the enemies were roasting their flesh upon the grass without the wall; the smell entered into those that swelled by famine, and their bellies burst, and their excrements flowed out; and this is the death worse than that of being slain with the sword.”

And to this agrees the Targum,

“more happy are they that are slain with the sword than they that are slain with famine; for they that are slain with the sword flowed when their bellies were burst, by that which they ate of the fruits of the field; and those that were inflated with famine, their bellies burst through “want” of food.”

Most interpreters refer this clause to those that died of famine: but Gussetius^{f120} interprets it of those that were killed with the sword; and renders and paraphrases the words thus, “for they being stabbed, sent out”; by the open wounds, “a flux, [which arose] from the fruits of the field”; their food and nourishment being yet in their belly and veins, and so did not pine away through penury and famine; and their misery was short and light, in comparison of others: and so Abendana.

Ver. 10. *The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children,* etc.] Such as were naturally, and agreeably to their sex, pitiful and compassionate; merciful to the poor, as the Targum; and especially tenderhearted to their own offspring; yet, by reason of the soreness of the famine, became so cruel and hardhearted, as to take their own children, and slay them with their own hands, cut them to pieces, put them into a pot of water, and make a fire and boil them, and then eat them, as follows:

they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people: at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. This strange and unnatural action was foretold by Moses, (⁽¹³⁸⁶⁾Deuteronomy 28:56,57); and though we have no particular instance of it on record, as done at the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, yet no doubt there was, as may be concluded from the words: and at the siege of it by the Romans, when many things here spoken of had a fuller accomplishment, we have a remarkable instance of it, which Josephus ^{f121} relates; an illustrious woman, named Mary, pressed with the famine, slew her own son, a sucking child, boiled him, and ate part of him, and laid up the rest; which was found by the seditious party that broke into her house, which struck them with the utmost horror; (see Gill on ⁽²¹²⁾Lamentations 2:20”).

Ver. 11. *The Lord hath accomplished his fury,* etc.] Which rose up in his mind, and which he purposed in himself to bring upon the sinful people of the Jews:

he hath poured out his fierce anger; the vials of his wrath in great abundance, even all he meant to pour out upon them:

and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof: not in the strong hold of Zion only, but in the whole city of Jerusalem, which was set on fire by the Chaldeans, as instruments, according to the will of God; and which not only consumed the houses of it, but even the foundations of them; so that it looked as if there was no hope of its ever being rebuilt. Aben Ezra interprets this fire of the famine.

Ver. 12. *The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world,* etc.] Not only the neighbouring nations, and the kings of them, but even such in all parts of the world that knew anything of Jerusalem:

would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy would have entered into the gates of Jerusalem; when it was besieging, they did not believe it would be taken; and when they heard it was, it was incredible to them; it being so strongly fortified by art and nature, with mountains and hills, with walls and bulwarks, and had such a vast number of people in it; and, especially, was the city of the great God, who had so often and so signally preserved and saved it: the “adversary” and “enemy” are the same, and design the Chaldeans. The Targum distinguishes them, and makes Nebuchadnezzar the ungodly to be the adversary; and Nebuzaradan the enemy, who entered to slay the people of the house of Israel, in the gates

of Jerusalem; this was a marvellous thing to the nations round about. Titus, when he took this city, acknowledged it was owing to God ^{f122};

“God (says he) favouring us, we fought; God is he that has drawn the Jews out of these fortresses; for human hands and machines could have done nothing against these towers.”

Ver. 13. *For the sins of her prophets, [and] the iniquities of her priests,* etc.] Aben Ezra interprets this of the prophets of Baal, and the priests of the high places; but though false prophets and wicked priests are meant, yet such as were among the Jews, made choice of and approved of by them: (see ^{<4664>}2 Chronicles 36:14); not that the people were faultless, but these were the principals, who by their examples led on and encouraged the common people in sin:

that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her; not the blood of innocent children, sacrificed to them by Moloch; but of good men in general, whom they persecuted and slew; and of the true prophets of the Lord in particular, whose blood they shed; and was the sin that brought on the destruction of their city by the Romans, as well as of that by the Chaldeans; (see ^{<4235>}Matthew 23:35-38 ^{<5116>}James 5:6).

Ver. 14. *They have wandered [as] blind [men] in the streets,* etc.] That is, the false prophets and wicked priests; and may be understood either literally, that when the city was taken, and they fled, they were like blind men, and knew not which way to go to make their escape, but wandered from place to place, and could find no way out; or spiritually, though they pretended to great light and knowledge, yet were as blind men, surrounded with the darkness of ignorance and error, and were blind leaders of the blind:

they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments; or, “could not but touch it with their garments” ^{f123}; or, “might not” ^{f124}; it was not lawful for them to do it: the sense is either, that, which way soever these men took to make their escape, they found so many dead carcasses in the streets, and such a profusion of blood by them, that they could not but touch it with their garments; or being besmeared with it, were so defiled, that others might not touch them, even their garments; or these men had defiled themselves with the shedding of the blood of righteous persons; so that they were odious to men, and they

shunned them as they would do anything that by the law rendered them in a ceremonious sense unclean, and therefore said as follows:

Ver. 15. *They cried unto them, depart ye, [it is] unclean*, etc.] Or, O ye “unclean”^{f125}; that is, the people said so to the priests, being polluted with blood; they abhorred them, did not care they should come nigh them, but bid them keep at distance; they that cleansed others of leprosy were treated as leprous persons themselves, and proclaimed unclean, and shunned as such: and, to show their vehement abhorrence of them, repeated the words,

depart, depart, touch not: that is, touch us not; they who had used to say; to others, stand by yourselves, we are more holy than you, being the Lord’s priests and prophets, are treated after the same manner themselves:

when they fled away, and wandered; fled from the city, and wandered among the nations; or when they were swiftly carried away captives, and became vagabonds in other countries:

they said among the Heathens, they shall no more sojourn [there]; being among the Heathens, they took notice of them as very wicked men, and said concerning them, now they are carried out of their own land, they shall never return there any more, and dwell in Jerusalem, and officiate in the temple, as they had formerly done.

Ver. 16. *The anger of the Lord hath divided them*, etc.] Or, “the face of the Lord”^{f126}; the anger that appeared in his face, in the dispensation of his providence, removed them out of their own land, and dispersed them among several countries and nations of the world, and as they now are: these are not the words of the Heathens continued, but of the prophet:

he will no more regard them; or, “he will not add to look on them”^{f127}, with a look of love, but continue his anger and resentment:

they respect not the persons of the priests, they favour not the elders; which is to be considered either as the sin of the false prophets and priests before described, which was the cause of their punishment; that they cast great contempt on the true prophets of the Lord, as Jeremiah and others, and showed no regard to the elders of the people, or those godly magistrates; who would have corrected and restrained them: or else this is said of the nations among whom they were dispersed, as the Targum; who would pay no respect to their characters as priests, or show any pity to them on account of their age.

Ver. 17. *As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help*, etc.] Or, “while we were yet”^{f128}; a nation, a people, a body politic, in our own land, before the city of Jerusalem was taken, we were looking for help, as was promised us; but it proved a vain help, none was given us; for which we kept looking to the last, till our eyes failed, and we could look no longer; no help appeared, nor was there any prospect or probability of it, and therefore gave all up:

in our watching we watched for a nation [that] could not save [us]; not the Romans, as the Targum, but the Egyptians; these promised them help and relief, and therefore in their watching they watched, or vehemently watched, and wistfully looked out for it, but all in vain; for though these made an attempt to help them, they durst not proceed; were obliged to retire, not being a match for the Chaldean army, and so could not save them, or break up the siege, and relieve them.

Ver. 18. *They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets*, etc.] The Chaldeans, from their forts and batteries, as they could see, they watched the people as they came out of their houses, and walked about the streets, and shot their arrows at them; so that they were obliged to keep within doors, and not stir out, which they could not do without great danger:

our end is near, for our days are fulfilled; for our end is come; either the end of their lives, the days, months, and years appointed for them being fulfilled; or the end of their commonwealth, the end of their civil and church state, at least as they thought; the time appointed for their destruction was not only near at hand, but was actually come; it was all over with them.

Ver. 19. *Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heavens*, etc.] That fly in the heavens; and which, as they have a quick sight to discern their prey afar off, are very swift to pursue it; they are the swiftest of birds, and are so to a proverb. Apuleius^{f129} represents the swift pursuit of their prey, and sudden falling upon it, to be like thunder and lightning. Cicero^{f130} relates of a certain racer, that came to an interpreter of dreams, and told him, that in his dream he seemed to become an eagle; upon which, says the interpreter, thou wilt be the conqueror; for no bird flies with such force and swiftness as that. And this bird is also remarkable for its constancy in flying: it is never weary, but keeps on flying to places the most remote. The poets have a fiction, that Jupiter, being desirous of knowing which was the middle of the world, sent out two eagles of equal swiftness, the one from

the east, and the other from the west, at the same moment; which stopped not till they came to Delphos, where they met, which showed that to be the spot; in memory of which, two golden eagles were placed in the temple there ^{f131}. The swiftness and constancy of these creatures in flying are here intended to set forth the speed and assiduity of the enemies of the Jews, in their pursuit after them; who followed them closely, and never ceased till they had overtaken them. The Chaldeans are designed, who pursued the Jews very hotly and eagerly, such as fled when the city was broken up; though not so much they themselves, as being thus swift of foot, as their horses on which they rode; (see ^{<2413>}Jeremiah 4:13).

they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness: or “plain” ^{f132}; there was no safety in either; such as fled to the mountains were pursued and overtaken there; and such who attempted to make their escape through the valleys were intercepted there: the reference is to the flight of Zedekiah, his nobles, and his army with him, who were pursued by the Chaldeans, and taken in the plains of Jericho, (^{<2517>}Jeremiah 52:7-9); hence it follows:

Ver. 20. *The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits,* etc.] Or “the Messiah”, or “the Christ of the Lord” ^{f133}; not Josiah, as the Targum; and so Jarchi and others; for though he was the Lord’s anointed, and the life of the people, being the head of them, as every king is, especially a good one; yet he was slain, and not taken, and much less in their pits, and that not by the Chaldeans, but by the Egyptians; nor did the kingdom cease with him, or the end of the Jewish state then come, which continued some years after: but rather Zedekiah, as Aben Ezra and others, the last of the kings of Judah, with whom all agrees; he was the Lord’s anointed as king, and the preserver of the lives and liberties of the people, at least as they hoped; but when the city was taken by the Chaldeans, and he fled for his life, they pursued him, and took him; he fell into their hands, their pits, snares, and nets, as was foretold he should; and which are sometimes called the net and snare of the Lord; (see ^{<2623>}Ezekiel 12:13 17:20); (see Gill on “^{<2749>}Lamentations 4:19”). Many of the ancient Christian writers apply this to Christ; and particularly Theodoret takes it to be a direct prophecy of him and his sufferings. Vatablus, who interprets it of Josiah, makes him to be a type of Christ; as Calvin does Zedekiah, of whom he expounds the words; and the Targum, in the king of Spain’s Bible, is,

“the King Messiah, who was beloved by us, as the breath of the spirit of life, which is in our nostrils.”

What is here said may be applied to Christ; he is the life of men, he gives them life and breath, and in him they live and move; their spiritual life is from him, and is maintained and preserved by him; he lives in his people, and they in him, and they cannot live without him, no more than a man without his breath: he is the Christ of God, anointed with the Holy Ghost to the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; and from whom Christians have their holy unction and their name: he was taken, not by the Chaldeans, but by the wicked Jews; who looked upon him as a very mischievous person, as if he had been an evil beast, a beast of prey, though the pure spotless Lamb of God; and they dug pits, laid snares, and formed schemes to take him, and at last did, and with wicked hands crucified him, and slew him; though not without his own and his Father’s will and knowledge, (~~4123~~ Acts 2:23);

of whom we said, under his shadow we shall live among the Heathen; in the midst of the nations round about them, unmolested by them, none daring to meddle with them; at least safe from being carried captive, as now they were. Though Jeconiah was taken and carried into Babylon, yet Zedekiah being placed upon the throne, the Jews hoped to live peaceable and quiet lives under his government, undisturbed by their neighbours; the wise and good government of a prince, and protection under it, being sometimes compared in Scripture to the shadow of a rock or tree, (~~231D~~ Isaiah 32:2 ~~2610B~~ Ezekiel 31:6 ~~2704D~~ Daniel 4:12); but now it was all over with them; their hope was gone, he being taken. Something like this may be observed in the disciples of Christ; they hoped he would have restored the kingdom to Israel, and they should have lived gloriously under his government; they trusted that it was he that should have redeemed Israel; but, when he was taken and crucified, their hope was in a manner gone, (~~224D~~ Luke 24:21). True believers in Christ do live peaceably, comfortably, and safely under him; they are among the Heathen, among the men of the world, liable to their reproaches, insults, and injuries; Christ is a tree, to which he is often compared, one and another, that casts a delightful, reviving, refreshing, and fructifying shadow, under which they sit with great delight, pleasure, and profit, (~~211B~~ Song of Solomon 2:3 ~~2847~~ Hosea 14:7); he is a rock, the shadow of which affords rest to weary souls, and shelters from the heat of divine wrath, the fiery law of God, and darts of Satan, and persecutions of men, (~~231D~~ Isaiah 32:2 25:4,5); and under his

government, protection, and power, they dwell safely, that sin cannot destroy them, nor Satan devour them, nor the world hurt them; here they live spiritually, and shall never die eternally, (^{2423b}Jeremiah 23:5,6 ^{4900c}Psalms 91:1).

Ver. 21. *Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom*, etc.] The land of Idumea, and the inhabitants of it, who did indeed rejoice at the destruction of Jerusalem, (Obidiah 1:12); and here, in an ironic manner, are bid to go on with their mirth, if they could, like the young man in (^{2110b}Ecclesiastes 11:9), as Aben Ezra observes; for it would not last long, their note would soon be changed:

that dwellest in the land of Uz; not the country of Job, which had its name from Uz the son of Nahor, (^{8000c}Job 1:1 ^{0221c}Genesis 22:21); but a country in Idumea, from whence the whole was so called, and that from Uz the son of Dishan, one of the sons of Seir: or else the sense is, that Edom or Idumea, and the inhabitants of it, dwelt upon the borders of Uz; and so agrees very well with the place of Job's residence, which was near the land of Edom. The Targum, according to R. Elias ^{f134}, is,

“rejoice, O wicked Rome;”

but, in the king of Spain's Bible, it is,

“rejoice and be glad, O Constantine (that is, Constantinople), the city of wicked Edom, which art built in the land of Armenia;”

and Jarchi says that Jeremiah prophesies concerning the destruction of the second temple, which the Romans destroyed; but in other copies, and according to Lyra, his words are, Jeremiah here prophesies concerning the destruction of the Roman empire, because that destroyed the temple; and it is usual with him, and other Rabbins, to interpret Edom of Rome;

the cup also shall pass through unto thee; the cup of God's wrath and vengeance; which, as it had come to the Jews, and was passing from one nation to another, in its turn would come to these Edomites; (see ^{2455b}Jeremiah 25:15,21);

thou shall be drunken, and shall make thyself naked; be overcome by it; as persons with wine, or any strong drink, reel to and fro, and fall; and be utterly destroyed, lie helpless and without strength: “and be made naked” ^{f135}, as it may be rendered; stripped of their riches and wealth; or they

should strip themselves of their clothes, and behave indecently, and expose those parts which ought to be covered, as drunken persons the sense is, they should be exposed, or expose themselves, to shame and contempt. The Septuagint version is, “and thou shalt be drunken, and pour out”^{f136}; that is, vomit, as drunken men do; and so Jarchi and Abendana interpret the word of vomiting; and the Targum is,

“and thou shalt be emptied.”

Ver. 22. *The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion,* etc.] In part in the seventy years’ captivity in Babylon, and more fully in their present captivity; for, as has been observed, there are some things in the preceding account, which had a further accomplishment in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the distress of the Jews by the Romans. The Targum is,

“and after thine iniquity is fulfilled, O congregation of Zion, and thou shalt be delivered by the hands of the Messiah, and of Elias the high priest;”

he will no more carry thee away into captivity; he, the enemy; or the Lord, as the Targum: that is, thou shall no more be carried captive: this seems to confirm the above observation, that this chapter is a prophecy of what would be, as well as a narrative of what had been; and includes the destruction both of the first and second temple, and of the Jews both by the Chaldeans and Romans; for it is certain, that, after their deliverance from the captivity of Babylon, they have been carried captive, and are now in captivity;

he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; punish the Edomites for their sins, as is elsewhere threatened, (²⁴⁰⁰Jeremiah 49:7-22 ³⁵⁵²Ezekiel 25:12) (³⁰⁰⁰Amos 1:11); which was fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar as an instrument; and may have some respect to the destruction of the Romans, when the Jews shall be converted, and return to their own land. The Targum, in the king of Spain’s Bible, is,

“and at that time I will visit thine iniquity, O wicked Rome, which art built in Italy, and full of multitudes of the children of Edom; and the Persians shall come and oppress thee, and make thee desolate;”

and so the copy used by Munster:

he will discover thy sins; by the punishment of them; as, when God pardons sins, he is said to cover them; so, when he punishes for them, he discovers them; (see ~~2490~~ Jeremiah 49:10).