

enemy fire in war. While we are very anxious to prevent war, we are often inexcusably careless about prevention of accidents. The people of Judah are rebuked by the prophet for the fact that there is just as much suffering and misery in their city as war would bring, not due to war but to the failure of the people to obey the law and maintain good order. People refuse to look their sin in the face. There is an inexcusable attitude of superficial frivolity.

This interpretation of verse 2 is proved to be correct when we look at the end of the passage. In verses 12 and 13 the prophet says that the Lord had called the people to "weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth." He had given them warnings of the trouble that is ahead. He had urged them to repent. But instead of repenting they have indulged in frivolity, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine. It reminds us of the situation at times in America. Sometimes many of us feel that there should be a day of national sorrow and penitence. We request a day of confession of sin before the Lord, but the attitude of the nation as a whole seems to be one of trusting to its own right arm, and of feeling confident that the miseries afflicting the rest of the world will never come to its own shores.

Since verse 3 is susceptible to two possible interpretations, let us look next at verse 4. The prophet gives his own reaction to the situation. He sees misery ahead. He knows that God will send calamity and trouble, and he weeps because of the fate that is bound to come to his own people, as a result of their sin.

Verse 5 describes the trouble and perplexity which the prophet knows to be ahead for the valley of vision. In his imagination he can already see the breaking down of the walls and hear the resounding cries of the people as their shrieks go out to the mountains round about.

It would seem likely that verse 3 is a part of the same picture as verses 4 and 5. In this case the prophet portrays the present situation in verses 1-2, and then begins to describe the future picture which he sees in his vision. All the rulers have fled together. They are found by the archers. This calamity occurs in the prophet's vision of the future fate of the city.