

Josiah was the last godly king of Judah. He was much loved by his people and in the year 609 B.C. he went out to fight a battle against Pharaoh Neco. In the battle he was fatally wounded. He died when he was taken back to Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 35:20–24) and his death caused great lamentation throughout the whole land. The people wept greatly because he was their king. But they also wept for themselves because they realized that with his death their fate was practically sealed, their days were numbered. Nebuchadnezzar was soon on their doorstep!

A private mourning

‘The land will mourn, each clan by itself, with their wives by themselves: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the clan of the house of Nathan and their wives, the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives, and all the rest of the clans and their wives’ (12:12–14).

This weeping is not a display in order to attract attention to the supposed holiness of the mourners. They will not be like the hypocrites who liked to ‘pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men’ (Matthew 6:5). These Jews will be so ashamed of their sin that they will creep away on their own, ‘each clan by itself’. Even the wives will mourn separately from their husbands.¹

‘No family and no individual will be satisfied to have others mourn in their stead. There is no vicarious mourning or substitutive repentance in God’s church.’^{2 3}

1 Michael Bentley, [*Building for God’s Glory: Haggai and Zechariah Simply Explained*](#), Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1989), 204.

2 Laetsch, *Minor Prophets*, p. 485.

3 Michael Bentley, [*Building for God’s Glory: Haggai and Zechariah Simply Explained*](#), Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1989), 204.