

Book of Lamentations

Study BIBLE



Introduction

Book No	25
Name	Lamentations
Written By	Jeremiah
Testament	Old
Category	Major Prophets
Date Written	Approx. 586 BC
Place Written	Jerusalem
Audience	To the people of Israel
Purpose	To teach people that to disobey God is to invite disaster, and to show that God suffers when his people suffer
History Covered	587 - 586 BC
Chapters	5
Verses	154
Key Verse	Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city. (2:11)
Key People	❖ Jeremiah
Key Places	❖ Jerusalem

Purpose of the Book

The books of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles describe the moral decline of the kingdom of Judah (in spite of prophetic warnings) that would lead to its defeat and captivity (see 2:17). When King Zedekiah rebelled against the Babylonians, to whom Judah was

subject, Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem (2 Kin. 24:20). While he was besieging it, the people inside were starving. When he breached the wall, Zedekiah and the soldiers managed to escape (2 Kin. 25:4). But they were soon taken captive. Nebuzaradan, Nebuchadnezzar's official, destroyed most of Jerusalem, burned the temple, and carried all but the poorest people into exile (2 Kin. 25:8–12).

The poems of this book seem to have been composed during and after the time in which all this was happening. These poems are especially heartrending when they contrast the former blessings and strengths of Judah with the chaos and suffering their sin had brought on them (see note on 1:7). The chosen, favored people had lost everything and were in a hopeless position. Everything of significance had been destroyed. But the poems also describe the ministry of Jeremiah, sent again as a prophet to speak about the changed circumstances of God's people. He helped them to give the necessary expression to their grief and to comfort them in it. He also encouraged them to think about the hand of God on them in punishment and helped them to submit penitently to the judgment they deserved until it had passed (3:28–33). Only after the people were completely humbled would they be able to think of restoration.

Jeremiah's grief ran deep. He is remembered as the "weeping prophet," and his tears flowed from a broken heart. As God's spokesman, he knew what lay ahead for Judah, his country, and for Jerusalem, the capital and "the city of God." God's judgment would fall and destruction would come. And so Jeremiah wept. His tears were not self-centered, mourning over personal suffering or loss. He wept because the people had rejected their God—the God who had made them, loved them, and sought repeatedly to bless them. Jeremiah's heart was broken because he knew that the selfishness and sinfulness of the people would bring them much suffering and an extended exile. Jeremiah's tears were tears of empathy and sympathy. His heart was broken with those things that break God's heart.

Lamentations features six major themes, all linked with the concept of suffering

1. Their Suffering Was the Result of Their Sin.
2. Their Suffering Was Seen as Coming from God Rather Than from Men
3. Their Suffering Could Direct Them Toward God
4. Suffering, Tears, and Prayer Belong Together
5. Prayer Should Always Look for Some Ray of Hope

6. Their Responsibility Was to Submit to Their Sufferings Patiently

This book has a great deal to say to us today

- ❖ The best way to survive grief is to express it.
- ❖ The destruction of Jerusalem and the lessons God taught His people were so significant that the Jews started reading this book at an annual service to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem. They did not want the painful experience to be forgotten. Defeats as well as victories need to be remembered. If the church would commemorate some of its failures, for which God has had to discipline it, these failures would be less likely to be repeated.
- ❖ When Christians have received much blessing and enlightenment from God, and then turn their backs on Him, it is an extremely serious matter. Privileges do not protect us either from responsibility or from discipline. They increase our responsibility and our culpability, and deserve more serious discipline. This is particularly true of church leaders.
- ❖ To what extent does God punish His people for their sins today? Christ's death for us and His resurrection have certainly redeemed us. We do not bear retributive punishment for any sin we commit, since Christ has suffered in our place. And God often allows suffering in our lives to discipline us (Heb. 12:3–17). Through it we learn to obey Him and become stronger Christians (vv. 9, 12, 13).
- ❖ Another consideration is church discipline. Christians who turn their backs on God should undergo some discipline in their home church. God sometimes disciplines people Himself by allowing suffering (1 Cor. 5:1–6) and even death (Acts 5:1–11). The main purpose of discipline, however, is restoration (2 Cor. 2:5–8).
- ❖ Even though we are not retributively punished for our sins, God will sometimes allow us to suffer when we have sinned in order to restore us to fellowship with Him. We need to submit to what God is doing and attempt to learn from the experience.
- ❖ If it is God's discipline, it will last as long as is necessary. There is no quickfix solution to some of these problems and no easy way out. Discipline will direct us to God, drive us to prayer, and bring us into submission. We need it.
- ❖ Of course, not all suffering is the result of God's discipline. Satan, too, can bring suffering on us (Job 2:7; Luke 13:16), but the suffering he brings is destructive rather than restorative.

Read Lamentations and learn what it means to grieve with God.

Overview

- ❖ 25th book of the BIBLE, Old Testament, 3rd of the 5 major prophets and 3rd of the 17 prophetic books
- ❖ Lamentations describes the funeral of a city—Jerusalem.
- ❖ Even in the midst of calamity, Jeremiah cries out to God in Lamentations 3:23 - “Great is your faithfulness.”
- ❖ Babylon is God’s instrument of judgment upon Judah.
- ❖ Jeremiah writes his lament in an acrostic or alphabetic fashion.
- ❖ There are five sections (poems).
- ❖ Each section begins with the Hebrew letter A (Aleph) and then proceeds through the Hebrew alphabet with the statements in each of the five poems.
- ❖ Jeremiah literally weeps from A to Z.
- ❖ The five sections can be divided as follow:
 - The Destruction of Jerusalem - Chapter 1
 - The Anger of Yahweh - Chapter 2
 - The Prayer for Mercy - Chapter 3
 - The Siege of Jerusalem - Chapter 4
 - The Prayer for Restoration - Chapter 5
- ❖ Six centuries later Christ would also weep over Jerusalem. Matthew 23:37-38
- ❖ Three themes appear in the Book of Lamentations:
 - ❖ Mourning over Jerusalem’s holocaust.
 - ❖ A confession of sin and an acknowledgment of God’s righteous and holy judgment upon Judah.
 - ❖ A note of hope in God’s future restoration.
- ❖ In His sorrow, Jeremiah:
 - Sometimes speaks for himself.
 - Sometimes speaks for the captives, some 900 miles away in Babylon.
 - Sometimes speaks for the personified city

Hebrew Names of GOD used in Lamentations

NA

Revelation of JESUS CHRIST

This book shows how weak people are under the Law, and how unable they are to serve God in their own strength. This drives them to Christ (Rom. 8:3). Even in these poems, however, glimpses of Christ shine through. He is our hope (3:21, 24, 29). He is the manifestation of God's mercy and compassion (3:22, 23, 32). He is our redemption and vindication (3:58, 59).

Work of THE HOLY SPIRIT

Divine grief over the sins of Israel (2:1–6) reminds us that the Holy Spirit was, and still is, often grieved by our behavior (Is. 63:10). Repentance is also an indication of the work of the Holy Spirit among God's people (3:40–42; John 16:7–11).

Mega Themes of Lamentations

DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

Lamentations is a sad funeral song for the great capital city of the Jews. The Temple has been destroyed, the king is gone, and the people are in exile. God had warned that he would destroy them if they abandoned him. Now, afterward, the people realize their condition and confess their sin.

God's warnings are justified. He does what he says he will do. His punishment for sin is certain. Only by confessing and renouncing our sin can we turn to him for deliverance. How much better to do so before his warnings are fulfilled.

GOD'S MERCY

God's compassion was at work even when the Israelites were experiencing the affliction of their Babylonian conquerors. Although the people had been unfaithful, God's faithfulness was great. He used this affliction to bring his people back to him.

God will always be faithful to his people. His merciful, refining work is evident even in affliction. At those times, we must pray for forgiveness and then turn to him for deliverance.

SIN'S CONSEQUENCES

God was angry at the prolonged rebellion by his people. Sin was the cause of their misery, and destruction was the result of their sin. The destruction of the nation shows the vanity of human glory and pride.

To continue in rebellion against God is to invite disaster. We must never trust our own leadership, resources, intelligence, or power more than God. If we do, we will experience consequences similar to Jerusalem's.

HOPE

God's mercy in sparing some of the people offers hope for better days. One day, the people will be restored to a true and fervent relationship with God.

Only God can deliver us from sin. Without him there is no comfort or hope for the future. Because of Christ's death for us and his promise to return, we have a bright hope for tomorrow.

Life Lessons in Lamentations

Truth	Lesson
<p>Growing in Godliness</p> <p>Godly living involves learning how to respond to God's discipline in our lives. In Lamentations, we see a picture of extreme judgment for extreme sin, but we know that God only disciplines those He loves, even as parents correct their children. Understanding this truth enables us to embrace the Lord's discipline, knowing that it is for our good and for the purpose of restoration and healing. Resisting God only makes things more difficult and prolongs the matter (Heb. 12:5–11).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Understand that even in times of deep trial and discipline from the Lord, His unfailing love and mercy are constantly available. The inheritance you have in God can never be taken away, so put your hope in Him. ❖ Hope expectantly and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. His discipline will not last forever, though at times it may feel like it will. ❖ Accept and submit to God's yoke of discipline for sin while you are still young. It will bear the "peaceable fruit of righteousness" throughout your life (Heb. 12:11). ❖ Do not resist the Lord's discipline or judgment. ❖ Embrace it; learn all you can while you are going through it. Humble yourself; acknowledge your sin, remembering that

	<p>God “gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6–10).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Let impending judgement call you to seasons of intercession for GOD’s people ❖ Implore GOD to pour out a SPIRIT of repentance and to show mercy ❖ Seek the LORD expecting that HE will bring good things to pass for you. ❖ Wait quietly for HIM to show you HIS salvation in any distress
<p>Cultivating Dynamic Devotion</p> <p>Learning to share in God’s heart for others is part of what makes our devotion to God dynamic and personal. In Lamentations, we see Jeremiah’s brokenness and tears expressed through prayer and intercession over the sin and judgment of God’s people. Like Jeremiah, we, too, can share God’s heart for people, for the church, and for the nations through prayer and intercession.</p> <p>We, too, can weep before God for the sins of His people and cry out for mercy, salvation, and restoration to come in the lives of those around us.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Do not hold back your tears as you pray and intercede. Cry out for mercy, for repentance, and for restoration. Do not hold back in pouring out your heart before the Lord. ❖ Be like the watchmen in the city. Be willing to pray and intercede on behalf of God’s people during the night. Lift up your hands; cry out in intercession, asking God to save the children, who suffer most when a city falls into sin. ❖ Persevere in prayer. Continue to travail and labor in prayer, beseeching the Lord until you see His mercy, compassion, and restoration come into the situation about which you are praying. ❖ Realize that it is never too early to begin spiritual development ❖ Encourage young people to become earnest and fruitful in their pursuit of GOD

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Challenge and inspire those who would otherwise postpone godliness until later in life
<p>Pursuing Holiness</p> <p>Lamentations teaches that God’s judgments are always righteous and just.</p> <p>God never judges, reprovess, or chastises anyone on a mere whim, but always as His righteous response to sin and rebellion. Love is always the motivation behind everything God does.</p> <p>He allows calamity only as a last resort to restore us to righteousness and relationship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Understand that God is righteous in all He does. It is the sin and rebellion of people that brings about judgment and discipline from the Lord. Acknowledge any sin in your life, confess it, and receive God’s forgiveness and mercy. ❖ Recognize that the goal of judgment is restoration. ❖ God’s tender love and compassion will follow times of sorrow. Believe that it is not God’s heart to afflict or cause grief. ❖ Understand that sin may seem enjoyable for a moment; but in the end it robs you of life and joy, bringing disaster, heartache, and God’s judgment. ❖ Only in God’s ways will you find joy, wholeness, life, and love everlasting. Turn to the Lord.
<p>The Walk of Faith</p> <p>It is often when we are in the deepest pit of despair, sorrow, and trial that faith finds its greatest expression.</p> <p>Trusting in God’s goodness and mercy is easy when our circumstances are favorable. However, in the fire of adversity, the purity of our faith is tested. The dross inevitably rises to the top and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Trust in the Lord; declare His faithfulness especially in times of great trial and distress. In the midst of sickness, imprisonment, torture, ridicule, attack, and hopelessness, Jeremiah was still able to declare his faith in God. Put your hope in God; through His mercy you will not be consumed. ❖ Know that His faithfulness is great and receive His fresh compassion every day.

<p>that which is pure shines even more brightly. May the grace of God enable us to lift our eyes from the darkness that surrounds us and put our faith in our merciful and compassionate Lord.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Understand that even the prophet Jeremiah experienced times of deep sorrow and discouragement. However, from that lowest, deepest pit he called on the name of the Lord. Call on God’s name— His character, His authority, and His faithfulness. Believe that God hears your voice; He is with you. Hear Him say to you, “Do not fear.”
<p>Steps to knowing GOD and HIS ways</p> <p>Lamentations calls attention to GOD’s faithfulness and righteousness in judgement. No judgement, chastisement or reproof ever comes as the result of divine caprice. It is always GOD’s righteous response to sin and rebellion. GOD loves us and allows calamity only as a last resort to restore us to righteousness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Remember that the LORD is always righteous in HIS judgement. ❖ Know that judgement is the fruit of sin and rebellion ❖ Acknowledge that the LORD is faithful to HIS WORD. ❖ Wait on the LORD and expect daily expressions of HIS mercy to you ❖ Be confident that judgement will often be followed by compassion and restoration because of GOD’s love ❖ Understand that GOD does not relish judgement as a disciplinary means, even though it is sometimes necessary ❖ Entrust yourself completely to the care of the LORD who is completely just in all HIS dealings
<p>Keys to wise living</p> <p>The wise person does not complain about adversity knowing that it can contribute to godliness. Response with dependence on GOD’s WORD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Do not complain about adversity in your life ❖ Accept GOD’s discipline as an expression of HIS Love to turn us from rebellion or disobedience

and repentance when needed will bring restoration	
<p>Lessons for leaders</p> <p>All of the major prophets put a great deal of responsibility for Israel's and Judah's sins squarely on the shoulders of their leaders, their priests, their prophets and their kings. This should become a strong admonition for those who lead God's church today. When God's people are judged due to the sins of their leaders, God's people tend to lose all respect even for legitimate leadership and faithful leaders thus often lose righteous influence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Leaders be reminded that when God's leaders fail to deal with sin, HE holds them responsible for the judgement which inevitably follows ❖ Leaders walk obediently, remembering that your sins can cause the downfall of God's people, bringing judgement to whole churches or fellowships of churches

Praise Points in Lamentations

- ❖ His love and faithfulness, which keep us from complete ruin (3:22-23)
- ❖ His attentiveness to our cries even while we are being punished (3:55-57)
- ❖ His concern for our righteousness, which may require him to punish us for our sins (5:15-16).

Worship Insights in Lamentations

In Old Testament times, worshipers often voiced their sorrow for sin through laments. Laments appear frequently in the poetic books of the Bible, particularly Job and Psalms, and occasionally in the historical books as well. Most laments have three parts: (1) an invocation (see Lamentations 5:1-17), (2) a list of the sufferer's sorrows (see Lamentations 1:1-10), and (3) a plea for deliverance (see Lamentations 5:21). Thus, the lament becomes an expression of worship because sorrow is softened by the certainty that God will hear the afflicted and save them. Scriptural laments were often read or sung during worship ceremonies that commemorated the destruction of the Temple.

- ❖ Since Lamentations itself was written in carefully crafted poetry, this book inspires us to express our worship in beautiful and artistic ways.
- ❖ Confession and repentance in worship provide warning for others (1:18-19).
- ❖ God's holiness stands in such contrast to our fallen nature that he appears to be our enemy when we receive the punishment that we deserve (2:4-5).
- ❖ Worship involves remembering God's great love and faithfulness even in the midst of trouble (3:22-23).
- ❖ Difficult and humbling experiences can help us mature in our view of God and ourselves (3:26-30).

An Outline of Lamentations

- I. How Lonely Sits the City ([Lam_1:1-22](#))
- II. How the Lord Has Covered ([Lam_2:1-22](#))
- III. I Am the Man ([Lam_3:1-66](#))
- IV. How the Gold Has Become Dim ([Lam_4:1-22](#))
- V. Remember, O Lord ([Lam_5:1-22](#))