

## 25 - Lamentations

Lamentations

Key Verse:

### INTRODUCTION TO LAMENTATIONS

Lamentations was written by Jeremiah. It is a book of poetry lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, events which occurred when the Babylonians invaded Judah in 586 BC. This book contains five laments. They are acrostics based on the Hebrew alphabet. Each poem has twenty-two verses--except for the third, which has sixty-six verses (3 x 22).

The devastation that occurred at that time was terrible. Kings, princes, elders, priests, prophets and ordinary people all suffered. Starving mothers even ate their own children. The most able and beautiful people were dragged off into exile. The writer knows that the enemy nation which invaded and wrought such destruction and brought such sorrow was the instrument of God's wrath. He does not blame God, however. He knows that these tragedies are God's just punishment for the sins of the people. So this book of laments expresses sorrow for sin, contrition of heart and a longing to come back to God and be restored.

The centerpiece of the book is in chapter 3. The writer confesses his faith in God's great love, compassion and faithfulness. All he desires is the Lord himself.

### BECAUSE OF HER REBELLION

Lamentations 1:1-22 (Tue.) Sept. 1

Key Verse: 1:18

#### 1. The Lord has brought her grief (1-11a)

Jerusalem was once like a queen among all cities; now she had become like a slave. Why? It was because of her many sins. The army of Babylon entered the city, looted its treasures, and took its finest people captive. The destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC by the Babylonians was not an accident--it was God's punishment, for she had sinned greatly. There was no one to comfort her (8,9).

#### 2. The high cost of rebellion (11b-22)

Verses 11b-22 are the voice of Jerusalem, crying for relief. The weeping city does not blame God, for he is righteous. The rebellious spirit of God's people is the root of sin; God only took her sins and wove them into a yoke for her neck (14). One who rebels against God's commands seems to be free--but he is forging a chain that will make him a slave.

Prayer: Lord, take away my rebellious spirit and help me to love and serve you so that I can be truly free.

One Word: Sin and rebellion become a yoke

## THE WEEPING PROPHET

Lamentations 2:1-22 (Wed.) Sept. 2

Key Verse: 2:18

### 1. The Lord became like an enemy (1-9)

God was angry because he loved his people, and they had sinned. He had covered them with a cloud of love; now he covered them with a cloud of anger. In his anger, he cut off their horns (their strength) (3). He removed their walls of protection. He became like an enemy; he poured out his wrath like fire. He rejected his altar and sanctuary and removed political and spiritual leadership so that his people became sheep without a shepherd.

### 2. The Lord has done what he planned (10-22)

The people mourned and suffered. The Prophet wept until his eyes failed. There was no comfort for Jerusalem. The prophets were misleading and false. There were no Bible teachers. So the people did not repent, and captivity could not be avoided. Now, their wound was so deep that no one could heal it. Still, the prophet and his people cry out to the Lord for mercy and help.

Prayer: Lord, give me a heart to weep for my people. Raise up shepherds and Bible teachers who can turn the hearts of the people of our nation to you.

One Word: Weep for the sinful world

## GREAT IS YOUR FAITHFULNESS

Lamentations 3:1-24 (Thur.) Sept. 3

Key Verse: 3:22,23

### 1. I am one who has seen affliction (1-18)

Jeremiah saw the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem as the rod of God's anger. He suffered with his people. He describes his utterly hopeless feelings in graphic terms. He is like a man mangled by a lion and left without help. He had no peace and no hope.

### 2. I remember (19-21)

When he began to remember his affliction and wandering, his soul was downcast. But as he continued to remember, new hope was born in his heart, for he remembered the love of God.

### 3. The Lord is my portion (22-24)

He was still alive. The people were in exile, but they were not dead. There is hope because of God's great love; God's great faithfulness and compassion never fail. Every morning is a new day. Let us say with Jeremiah, "The Lord is my portion; I will wait for him."

Prayer: Lord, help me not to despair when I suffer because of my sins or those of my people. You are my portion; I will wait on you.

One Word: The Lord is my portion

LET US RETURN TO THE LORD

Lamentations 3:25-66 (Fri.) Sept. 4

Key Verse: 3:40

1. The Lord is good (25-39)

The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him. Suffering is not always evil; it can build a person's character, if he waits on God. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. God does not punish forever. He brings grief and he shows compassion. He does not deprive men of justice. He punishes us for sins so that we can repent and seek him.

2. Let us examine our ways (40-54)

We should not complain when we are punished for our sins; this is the time to examine our lives and repent. Jeremiah acknowledged his sins and the sins of the people. God's punishment was just. He wept tears of repentance and asked God's mercy.

3. You came near when I called (55-66)

When we call on God from the depths of the pit he comes near and says, "Do not fear" (56-57).

Prayer: Lord, teach me to seek you with tears of repentance instead of complaining.

One Word: Hope in God

BECAUSE OF THE SINS OF THE PROPHETS

Lamentations 4:1-22 (Sat.) Sept. 5

Key Verse: 4:13

1. How the gold has lost its luster! (1-12)

Jerusalem was the jewel in God's crown, the most beautiful city in the world. It was considered indestructible. But suddenly its fortunes changed. The city was besieged. Slow death by famine

was worse than the sudden destruction of Sodom by fire. Precious children became great burdens. People became totally indifferent, like ostriches who stick their heads in the sand. Mothers even turned into cannibals. God gave full vent to his wrath.

## 2. Because of the sins of the prophets (13-22)

Prophets and priests shed the blood of the righteous. They were the forerunners of the priests who had Jesus crucified (13,20). The men who should have been servants of God and shepherds of his flock did not teach the Lord's word. They killed God's anointed. But God is never defeated.

Prayer: Lord, our security is not in strong defenses but in a people obedient to your word. Turn our hearts to you in repentance. Heal our land.

One Word: Prophets must obey God's words

RESTORE US TO YOURSELF, O LORD

Lamentations 5:1-22 (Sun.) Sept. 6

Key Verse: 5:21

## 1. Joy is gone from our hearts (1-18)

Some people think that freedom from God will make them happy. This was not the experience of Israel. When they rebelled against God and sinned, they lost everything they had valued. Their land was turned over to foreigners. They had to submit to the yoke of the superpowers in order to get enough food to eat. Their women were ravished by soldiers of foreign armies. Elders no longer sat in the city gate, and young men no longer got together to make music. Joy was gone from the land. Sin cuts us off from God and ruins our lives.

## 2. Restore us to yourself, O Lord (19-22)

The fortunes of men and nations rise and fall, but God's throne is forever. Our hope and the hope of all mankind is in God alone. When we repent and our relationship with God is restored, then joy is also restored to the heart.

Prayer: Lord, our sins have made a separation between you and us. There is no joy and no peace without you. Restore us to yourself.

One Word: Restore us to yourself, O God