

LAMENTATIONS

Author: Anonymous/Jeremiah

Date: 587/586 B.C.

Known as the book of tears, Lamentations describes the funeral of a city. It is a tear-stained song of a once-proud Jerusalem, now reduced to rubble by the invading Babylonians. In this five-poem funeral dirge, Jeremiah expresses the deep emotion of one who has seen the slaughter of many of his people, the enslavement of others, and the despair of the few remaining survivors.

The five poems each comprise a chapter, and the first four have an acrostic structure—a literary form that follows the pattern of the alphabet: the first verse or group of verses begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the second with the second, and so forth. Of course, this structure is almost impossible to reproduce in translation.

As you read Lamentations, visualize Jeremiah sitting on a hill looking at his people being taken into captivity, chained and pulled along. He has seen women raped, mothers eat their children, and priests slain in the Temple. He has seen the city burned and the temple robbed, torn down, and burned. Jeremiah weeps in sorrow over the sins of his people. Centuries later, Jesus weeps over the sins of His people on this same hill (Matthew 23:37-38).

The Jews still sing this song once a year on the 9th of Av as part of a funeral procession by the Western Wall of Jerusalem and in synagogues around the world. It is to remind them of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians and 70 A.D. by the Romans.

Theme: The message is to teach the people that to disobey God is to invite disaster and to show that God suffers when His people suffer. The book served the purpose of helping the people of Judah maintain their faith in God in the midst of overwhelming tragedy. Lamentations expresses the convictions that God had dealt justly with His people. The writer wants the people to recognize the righteousness of God's dealings with them and to cast themselves upon the mercy of the Lord.

Key verses: *Because of the LORD'S great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him. (3:22-25)*

OUTLINE

- I. The Desolation and Destruction of Jerusalem (Ch. 1)
- II. God's Anger at His Peoples' Sin (Ch. 2)
- III. The Prayer for Mercy and the Hope of the Prophet (Ch. 3)
- IV. The Siege of Jerusalem (Ch. 4)
- V. Prayer for Restoration (Ch. 5)

Ways Jeremiah foreshadows or is a typology of Jesus Christ:

Both suffered though innocent (Jer. 26:15; Matt. 27:4)

Both were said to be worthy of death (Jer. 26:11; Matt. 26:65-66)

Both were misunderstood and persecuted by people of their own hometowns (Jer. 11:21; Luke 4:28-30)

Both preached God's Word boldly about turning from sin and to God with all their hearts (Jer. 7:9-15; Matt. 15:8)

Both were enemies of the Jewish religious and political leaders/kings

Both charged priestly leadership with making the temple a den of robbers (Jer. 7:11; Mt. 21:13)

Both condemned hypocrisy and foretold disaster unless the people turned away from sin and turned to God with all their hearts (Jer. 7:9-15; Mt. 15:8)

Both were described as "a lamb being led to the slaughter" (Jer. 11:19; Is. 53:7; Jn. 1:29)

Both wept over Jerusalem's sins (Jer. 13:17; Luke 19:41)

Neither married or had children (Jer. 16:1-2; the Gospels)

Both were mocked (Jer. 20:7; Matt 27:31; Luke 18:31-32; 22:63)

Both denounced the Temple as corrupt and foretold its destruction (Jer. 25:9, 11; Mat. 24:1-2)

Both offered God's comfort and hope (Jer. 29:11-14; Lam. 3:22-25; John 14:1, 27)

Both were accused of being mad (Jer. 29:26; John 10:20)

Both preached of a New Covenant that would transform the heart (Jer. 31:31-34; Luke 22:20; Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15)

Both were rejected by the secular king of the Jews (Jer. 32:2-4; Luke 23:8-11)

Both were falsely accused, arrested and beaten (Jer. 37:12-15; Matt. 26:61; 27:26)

Both were thrown in a cistern (Jer. 38:6-13; John 18:28)

Both were taken to Egypt due to political persecution (Jer. 44; Mt. 2:13)

Both taught that God would judge the world for their sin.