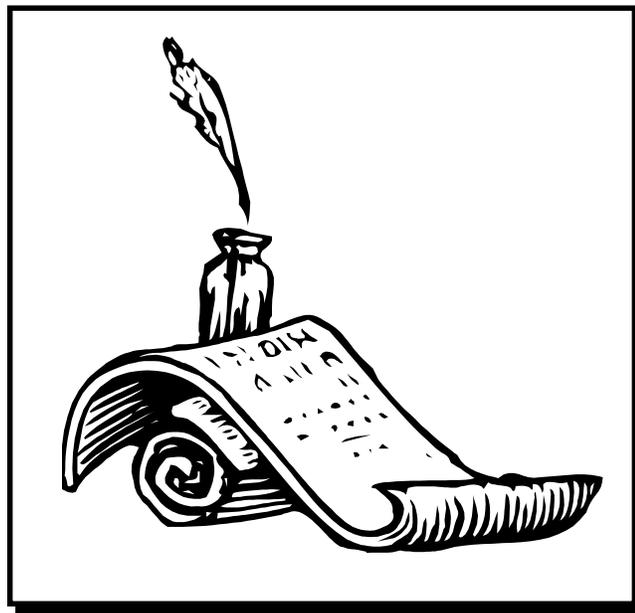


The Lamentations Of Jeremiah



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The Lamentations Of Jeremiah

Lesson 1 - General Introduction

Introduction

In **Mt. 23:37-39**, we see our Lord lamenting over the destruction of Jerusalem. We see His pain and agony over her refusal to accept Him and the other prophetic spokesmen God had sent. Yet, some 600 years before Him, there was another lament over Jerusalem’s fate, this one spoken at the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587/586 B.C.

“When the city was destroyed, sorrow filled the Jews. In spite of Jeremiah’s preaching, the Jews were shocked when they saw Jerusalem burned. How could the Lord allow the holy city and temple to be destroyed? Had His promises failed? Did He no longer care for them? What would be their future? Would justice ever be meted out to their enemies? Five poems, combined as the book of Lamentations, give realistic answers to these questions. However, Lamentations is more than a crying complaint against God. It explains the cause of Jerusalem’s fall and thereby give a proper perspective to their calamities. Thus, Lamentations affirms the justice and unfailing goodness of God.” (*Robert Harkrider*).

The **Book of Lamentations** has been billed as “a natural supplement” to the **Book of Jeremiah**. Some view the last chapter of Jeremiah as an introduction to Lamentations. The Septuagint (*the Greek translation of the Old Testament*) gives this prefix: “And it came to pass, after Israel was taken captive, and Jerusalem made desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented this lamentation over Jerusalem, and said...”

In **Jeremiah**, we see the preaching of God’s servant rebuking Jerusalem of her sin that destroyed her. In **Lamentations**, the Divine judgment has occurred, and we see this same servant’s anguish manifested at what has happened to God’s children.

Structure

The name Lamentations means “elegies; mournful or plaintive poems.” Each chapter, however, does not stand on its own, but falls into a series making the book one complete, progressive thought. Notice the following chart from J. Sidlow Baxter’s work, *Explore The Book*:

Lament 1 <i>Jerusalem's Plight</i>	Lament 2 <i>Jehovah's Anger</i>	Lament 3 <i>Jeremiah's Grief</i>	Lament 4 <i>Jehovah's Anger</i>	Lament 5 <i>Jerusalem's Prayer</i>
The Prophet Bemoans It (1-11)	The Anger Described (1-12)	Affliction, Yet Hope (1-39)	Contrasts - And Why (1-11)	Plea: Zion Is Stricken (1-18)
The City Bemoans It (12-22)	The City Exhorted (13-22)	Plea: National, Personal (40-66)	Onlookers - Kings, Edom (13-22)	Plea: Jehovah Can Restore (19-22)

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It is also interesting to note that the laments are acrostic in form. This means that each verse begins with successive letters based on the Hebrew alphabet. Laments **1, 2, and 4** each have 22 verses, corresponding with the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. However, Lament **3** has three (3) verses allotted to each successive Hebrew letter instead of one, thereby making 66 verses. Although Lament **5** has 22 verses, it is not acrostic. The acrostic style seems to have been a favorite way of composing Hebrew poetry. Acrostic poetry was generally used for public worship, and its format was an aid to facilitate memorization of the texts.

The weight of both ancient tradition and internal evidence point to Jeremiah as the author, but this is not absolutely conclusive. We do know, however, from **2 Chron. 35:25** that Jeremiah was familiar with writing laments, as well as what is recorded in **Jer. 9:1ff**. We accept the Jeremiahic authorship.

Theme

The central message of **Lamentations** is the suffering that befell Jerusalem. “It expresses the prophet’s grief for the desolation of the city and the temple of Jerusalem, the captivity, the famine, and other calamities which his fellow Jews had suffered because of sin.” (*Hoyt Houchen, What Is In The Book?*) Yet, it also expresses hope and consolation for God’s people, in that He has the power to restore His people once again to fellowship with Him.

We never see Jeremiah express in **Lamentations** an “I told you so” attitude. That this was so does not surprise us, for we remember his grief over the people’s refusal to repent in our studies in **Jeremiah**. Rather, he mourned Jerusalem’s sorrows, and pled with God not to cast her off forever.

Outline of the Book

- A) The prophet and people weep over Jerusalem’s destruction (**Lament 1**)
- B) God’s judgment upon His people is described (**Lament 2**)
- C) Jeremiah’s grief is comforted only by the hope of God’s mercy (**Lament 3**)
- D) Judah has become like tarnished gold because of its sin (**Lament 4**)
- E) Jeremiah’s prayer for mercy upon Jerusalem (**Lament 5**)

— Robert Harkrider

Jerusalem's Sorrow Over Jehovah's Anger (Laments 1 & 2)

Introduction

In the first lament, we catch the initial glimpse into how both the prophet (Jeremiah) and the city (the people) feel about Jerusalem's fall. We then learn from the second lament all that is described in the first one is ascribed to Jehovah Himself. It was all the Lord's doing, just as had been predicted in Jeremiah's preaching and prophesying.

Will we ever get over learning our lessons too late? Now, the city recognizes that what she has done has been against the God and Husband of her covenant. Why she couldn't have seen this earlier to prevent the judgment upon her is still a mystery to this day. It can only be explained that the blindness of her sins kept her from repenting and avoiding what she now experiences. This, too, stands to teach us today about our own shortcomings before God. Sad will be the wailing cry at judgment from those of us who then recognize our sins before God, but did not turn from them when we were offered the chance in our lifetimes.

Lament 1

- 1) To what is Jerusalem likened in **1:1**? Why do you think this is an appropriate analogy? What does it mean that she has become a forced laborer? (**1:1**) Who deserted her? (**1:2**)

- 2) What words are used to describe fallen Jerusalem's condition in **1:1-11**? What three reasons are given for her fall?

- 3) What is described in **1:4**? Why do you think this is mentioned? What is described in **1:6**? What is painfully admitted in **1:7**?

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- 4) In **1:9**, what do you think “she did not consider her future” means? Is there any lesson we can learn from this?

- 5) Do you notice any change in voice between **1:1-11** and **1:12-22**? What do you think the change means?

- 6) In **1:16**, what increased Judah’s sorrow? (**cp. Isa. 59:1-2**) What is the point of **1:18**? What do you think about the timing of this statement?

- 7) For what does Judah pray in **1:20-22**? Do you see any irony between this prayer and the ones Jeremiah continually lifted up on their behalf before God told him to stop praying?

Lament 2

- 8) In **2:1-9**, what is described? What key words or phrases are repeated in these verses?

- 9) To what does God’s footstool in **2:1** refer? (**cf. 1 Chron. 28:2**)

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Lesson 2

- 10) In **2:6-9**, what indicates the ceasing of worship under the law of Moses? What ideas indicate the pathetic condition of the people? (**2:10-12**)

- 11) What is the point of the questions in **2:13**? What should we learn from **2:14**?

- 12) In **2:13-19**, who could not provide comfort? What should we learn from **2:17**? For what does Jeremiah pray in **2:20-22**?

Jeremiah's Grief Over Jehovah's Anger And His Resulting Prayer (Laments 3, 4, & 5)

Introduction

Jeremiah speaks of his own sorrow over Jerusalem's fall before God in the third lament, the longest of the five found in Lamentations. His own spirit is identified with the people's, and he shares in their afflictions. We recall from our studies in Jeremiah how it wasn't pleasant for the prophet to carry out the preaching of rebuke on his fellow Jews; it caused him sorrow. Coupled with that burden was the suffering he experienced from his countrymen because of his preaching. This, indeed, made his burden heavy. He now laments those feelings.

Like the second lament, the fourth one is centered around Jehovah's anger. However, this lament speaks of God's anger defended whereas the second one described it. How just and right it was for God to be wrathful over the sins of His people! This emphasizes the just and righteous nature of God, and also serves to call us to a higher standard of living. Just think...how disappointed do you suppose God is when we sin when both He and we know we can do better?

Finally, the fifth lament closes the book with a prayer on Jerusalem's behalf. The prayer springs from the city's pitiful plight (**vv. 1-18**), and ends with proclaiming hope in Jehovah's ability to be faithful to His people, and restore them to fellowship (**vv. 19-22**).

Lament 3

- 1) In **3:1**, Jeremiah states that he has seen the affliction by the rod of God's wrath. List the thing in each of the following verses to which Jeremiah compares his despair:

v. 2 _____ v. 9 _____

v. 3 _____ vv. 10-11 _____

v. 4 _____ vv. 12-13 _____

v. 5 _____ v. 14 _____

v. 6 _____ vv. 15-16 _____

v. 7 _____ v. 17 _____

v. 8 _____ v. 18 _____

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- 2) When Jeremiah remembered his affliction, he was humbled (**3:19-20**). However, he still had hope. What gave him this hope?

- 3) List the ways Jeremiah praises God in **3:22-25**.

v. 22 _____ v. 24 _____
v. 25 _____ v. 26 _____

- 4) What does Jeremiah say in **3:26-28** is good for a man? What do you think it means to “wait for God”? List ways this applies to us today.

- 5) What verses show that God does not delight in the sufferings and afflictions of men?

- 6) What does **3:34-36** teach about men treating each other cruelly?

- 7) Why do men have no reason to complain against God? (**3:39**) In **3:40-42**, self-examination discovers that the cause of affliction is what? What can we learn from this?

- 8) From **3:43-47**, what are the results of unforgiven sins?

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Lesson 3

- 9) What does Jeremiah recall in **3:52-58**? How does he describe the outcome when he called on God for help?
- 10) In **3:59-66**, the prophet cries to God for Judah. What is his request?

Lament 4

- 11) Summarize from **4:1-12** Jeremiah's description of the suffering Jerusalem experienced.
- 12) In **4:13-20**, what two reasons are given for God's anger with Judah? Describe the irony in **4:21-22**.

Lament 5

- 13) In **5:1-18**, Jeremiah describes Judah's affliction in a prayer asking God to remove their shame. List some of the descriptions.

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Lesson 3

14) What lesson can we learn from **5:15**?

15) Summarize **5:19-22**.