

LAMENTATIONS

Introduction / Background

Jerusalem, the city of David with a rich and proud history has been decimated by the Babylonians (Jeremiah 52:4-16)

The town is literally in ruins and most of the citizens taken away as captive slaves to a foreign land (Lamentations 1:1-3)

The situation for those left in the city is horrible (Lamentations 1:11; 2:19-20; 4:4)

Jeremiah the prophet, believed to be the author of this book, is left in the city and records five laments

1. Insights to Help Us Understand this Book

A) Each chapter is an individual lament or dirge

B) Interesting to note: how many verses are in chapters 1, 2, 4, 5?

> Chapters 1, 2, 4 are structured on the Hebrew alphabet which has 22 letters

> Chapter 3 has 66 verses – three stanzas that begin with each letter of the alphabet

> Chapter 5 has 22 verses but it does not use the alphabet as its structure

C) The Structure or Outline of the Book

Jeremiah's Response (Chapter 3)

God's Judgment (Chapter 2)

The Lord's Anger (Chapter 4)

Jerusalem's Desolation (Chapter 1)

The Remnant's Response (Chapter 5)

D) The Uniqueness of each Lament

> Lamentations 1 – Jerusalem's Desolation

Notice the phrase, "there is none to comfort her" (Lamentations 1:2, 9, 16, 17, 21)

> Lamentations 2 – God's Judgment

The Lord has administered His judgment

> Lamentations 3 – Jeremiah's Response

In the heart of all of the laments and in the middle of Jeremiah's lament we find these gems which epitomize and illustrate the heart of faith (Lamentations 3:21-26, 31-32)

> Lamentations 4 – The Lord's Anger

Notice the severity of the Lord's judgment is clear (Lamentations 4:6, 9-11)

Notice the cause for the Lord's judgment is clear (Lamentations 4:22)

> Lamentations 5 – The Remnant's Response

The lamentations end with a ray of hope

The people acknowledge and repent of their sin (Lamentations 5:7, 16)

The ray of hope is in God's covenantal mercy (Lamentations 5:19-22)

The hope and promise of Leviticus 26:40-45

2. Jeremiah's personal suffering during this time (Jeremiah 1:12)

A) A reminder that righteous people suffer because of the unrighteousness of those around them

> Bad things happen to good people who live in a world permeated by sin

> This lesson is seen in our lives

One rebellious family member can bring great grief to all of their family

One rebellious church family member can bring great grief to the church

B) Lining yourself up with God does not always make you popular

> The unrighteous people who are suffering because they rejected God, His authority, and His prophets take out their anger on Jeremiah (Jeremiah 3:52-57)

> The false prophets who were so well received by the people brought great harm to the people (Lamentations 2:14; 4:13)

> LESSON: Popularity and "success" are often cited as evidence of God's blessing or approval (Luke 6:26)

3. Lessons from Lamentations

A) God desires to live with and bless His people

B) Sin and sinful ways bring God's judgment

C) God's grace is extended for His glory

D) The only hope for the sinner is found in confession, repentance, and God's faithfulness