

# Lamentations

**MEANING:** “Laments,” “tears.”

**AUTHOR:** Although the author of Lamentations is not named in the book, internal and external evidence consistently favors Jeremiah.

**TIME WRITTEN:** The book was written soon after Jerusalem’s destruction (Jeremiah 39:52) at the beginning of the exile.

1. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem from January 588 B.C. to July 19.
2. Jerusalem fell on July 19.
3. The city and the temple were burned on August 15.
4. Thus, Jeremiah probably wrote lamentations before he was taken captive to Egypt by his disobedient countrymen not long after the destruction (Jeremiah 43:1-7)

**POSITION IN THE BIBLE:**

- 25th Book in the Bible
- 25th book in the Old Testament
- 3rd of 17 books of Prophecy
- 3rd of 5 Major Prophet Books
- 24 have preceded it. 41 to follow it.

**CHAPTERS:** 5

**VERSES:** 154

**WORDS:** 3,415

**KEY WORD:** Lamentations

**TWO KEY PASSAGES:**

1. **Lamentations 2:5-6** - “The Lord was like an enemy. He has swallowed up Israel, he has swallowed up all her palaces; he has destroyed her strongholds, and has increased mourning and lamentation in the daughter of Judah.

He has done violence to His tabernacle, as if it were a garden; he has destroyed His place of assembly; the LORD has caused the appointed feasts and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion. In His burning indignation He has spurned the king and the priest.”

2. **Lamentations 3:22-23** - “Through the LORD’S mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.

They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”

**KEY CHAPTER:** Lamentations 3

1. In the midst of five chapters of ruin, destruction, and utter hopelessness, Jeremiah rises and grasps with strong faith, the promises and character of God.

2. Lamentations 3:2-25 expresses a magnificent faith in the mercy of God—especially when placed against the dark backdrop of chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5.

### **OBSERVATIONS ABOUT LAMENTATIONS:**

1. Lamentations describe the funeral of a city.
  - a. It is a tearstained portrait of the once proud Jerusalem, now reduced to rubble the invading Babylonians
  - b. In a five-poem dirge, Jeremiah exposes his emotions.
  - b. A death has occurred, Jerusalem lies barren.
2. Jeremiah writes his lament in acrostic or alphabetic fashion.
  - a. There are five different sections (poems).
  - b. Each section begins with the Hebrew letter A (Aleph) then proceeds through the Hebrew alphabet with the statements in each of the five poems.
  - c. Jeremiah literally weeps from A to Z.
3. Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem.
  - a. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem from January 588 B.C. to July 586 B.C.
  - b. Following a siege that lasted one year and seven months, the city finally fell on July 19, 586 B.C.
  - c. One month later on August 15, the city and the temple were burned.
4. In the midst of this terrible holocaust, Jeremiah triumphantly cries out, "Great is Your faithfulness" (3:23).
5. In the light of the God he knows and loves, Jeremiah finds hope and comfort.
6. Jeremiah is a type (A historical fact that illustrates a spiritual truth) of Christ in that Christ also wept over the city of Jerusalem some six centuries later.  
**Mathew 23:37-38** - "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!  
 See! Your house is left to you desolate."
7. Three themes seem to surface in Jeremiah.
  - a. 1st - The most prominent is the theme of mourning over Jerusalem's holocaust.
    1. The Holy City has been laid waste and desolate.
    2. God's promised judgment for sin has come.
    3. In his sorrow, Jeremiah speaks for:
      - a. Sometimes for himself
      - b. Sometimes for the captives.
      - c. Sometimes for the personified city.

- b. 2nd - The second theme is a confession of sin and an acknowledgment of God's righteous and holy judgment upon Judah.
- c. 3rd - The third theme is least prominent but very important.
  - 1. It is a note of hope in God's future restoration of His people.
  - 2. Yahweh has poured out His wrath, but in His mercy He will be faithful to His covenant promises.

## **SUMMARY OF LAMENTATIONS**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

- A. For forty years Jeremiah suffers rejection and abuse for his warnings of coming judgment.
  - 1. When Nebuchadnezzar finally comes and destroys Jerusalem in 586 B.C., a lesser man might say, "I told you so!"
  - 2. But Jeremiah compassionately identifies with the tragic overthrow of Jerusalem and composes five beautiful and emotional lament poems as a requiem for the once proud city.
  - 3. These lament poems reflect the tender heart of the man who was commissioned to communicate a harsh message to a sinful and stiff-necked people.
- B. Great destruction has taken place.
  - 1. The city, the temple, the palace, and the walls have been reduced to rubble.
  - 2. Its inhabitants have been deported to Babylon, some 900 miles away.
- C. Jeremiah's five mournful poems can be divided as follows:
  - 1. The Destruction of Jerusalem. (1)
  - 2. The Anger of Yahweh. (2)
  - 3. The Prayer for Mercy. (3)
  - 4. The Siege of Jerusalem. (4)
  - 5. Prayer for Restoration. (5)

### **THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM. (1)**

- A. This poem consists of two parts.
  - 1. A lamentation by Jeremiah. (1:1-11)
  - 2. A lamentation by the personified Jerusalem. (1:12-22)
    - a. Jerusalem as been left desolate because of its grievous sins.
    - b. Jerusalem's enemies have mocked at her downfall." (1:17)
    - c. Jerusalem with God to regard her misery and repay her adversaries.

### **THE ANGER OF YAHWEH. (2)**

- A. In his second lament, Jeremiah moves from Jerusalem's desolation to a description of her destruction.
1. Babylon has destroyed the city, but only as the Lord's instrument of judgment.
  2. Jeremiah presents an eyewitness account of the thoroughness and severity of Jerusalem's devastation.
  3. Babylon has:
    - a. Terminated all religious observances.
    - b. Removed the priests, prophets, and kings.
    - c. Destroyed the temple, palaces, and walls.
  4. Even though all this has happened, Jeremiah grieves over the suffering the people brought on themselves through rebellion against God.
  5. Jerusalem's supplications complete the lament.

### **THE PRAYER FOR MERCY. (3)**

- A. In the first eighteen verses, Jeremiah enters into the miseries and despair of his people and makes them his own.
- B. However, there is an abrupt turn in verse 19-39 as the prophet reflects on the faithfulness and loyal love of the compassionate God of Israel.
1. These truths enable him to find comfort and hope in spite of his dismal circumstances.
  2. Jeremiah expresses his deep sorrow and petitions God:
    - a. For deliverance.
    - b. For God to avenge Jerusalem's misery.

### **THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM. (4)**

- A. The prophet rehearses the siege of Jerusalem and remembers the suffering and starvation of rich and poor.
1. He also reviews the causes of the siege, especially the sins of the prophets and priests and their foolish trust in human aid.
  2. This fourth closes with two things:
    - a. A warning to Edom of future punishment .
    - b. A glimmer of hope for Jerusalem.

### **PRAYER FOR RESTORATION. (5)**

- A. Jeremiah's last poem is a melancholy description of his people's lamentable state.
- B. Their punishment is complete and Jeremiah prayerfully desires the restoration of his nation.