

Broken Hearts

Jeremiah labored for approximately 40 years, persistently and compassionately sharing God's message of warning. Again and again he sought to call the people to repentance. His reward? The people he loved mocked him, imprisoned him, and even sought to kill him on multiple occasions. We could understand if such treatment would callous a man over the years. We wouldn't blame Jeremiah if, after his prophecies came to fruition, he yelled out, "I told you so!" But that's not what he did. Jeremiah loved his people—*truly* loved them. He held the type of love that isn't dissuaded by mistreatment. His love was from God and based in God's Word. Thus, when Jeremiah witnessed the destruction of the people who had oppressed him, he wept. Jeremiah did not rejoice that they got what they deserved; he lamented. What a picture of true, godly leadership. It's easy to become disgruntled when others ignore, reject, or mistreat us. The servant of God, however, cares for the souls of others, and that type of love transcends bitterness based on how one is treated. The people Jeremiah ministered to may have had hardened hearts, but that didn't harden his—it broke his heart to see them continue on towards destruction.

In Jeremiah's weeping, we see a picture of Christ Himself. Jesus too would weep for the city of Jerusalem. In Matthew 23:37 Jesus says, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate...*" Like Jeremiah, Jesus was rejected and persecuted by the very people He was trying to save. Also like Jeremiah, Jesus mourned the hard-heartedness of those people. Jesus also died to save your soul—do you live in obedience to His will, or does your rebellion break His heart also?



Outline of Lamentations

The Destruction of Jerusalem

Jeremiah's Lament (1:1-11)

Jerusalem's Lament (1:12-22)

The Anger of God

The Anger of God (2:1-9)

The Agony of Jerusalem (2:10-17)

The Appeal of Jerusalem (2:18-22)

The Prayer for Mercy

Jeremiah's Cry of Despair (3:1-18)

Jeremiah's Confession of Faith (3:19-39)

Jeremiah's Condition of Need (3:40-54)

Jeremiah's Confidence in God (3:55-66)

The Siege of Jerusalem

Conditions During the Siege (4:1-10)

Cause of the Siege (4:11-20)

Consequences of the Siege (4:21-22)

The Prayer for Restoration

Review of Need for Restoration (5:1-15)

Repentance from Sin (5:16-18)

Request for Restoration (5:19-22)

Hope in Despair

While Lamentations is a lament, and thus a dark and even depressing read, it is not void of hope. On the contrary, perhaps the greatest purpose of the book is to remind us that the only hope of overcoming sin and its disastrous effects is God! It also teaches the great need to trust in God, which Jeremiah certainly did. In the midst of suffering and despair; in the midst of lament and sorrow; Jeremiah still found hope in God. He says in 3:22-24 "*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.'*" Even when it seemed all hope was lost, Jeremiah remembered and trusted in the steadfast love of the Lord. Yes, God will punish sin if we do not repent. But He has offered us a means of redemption through His Son so that we don't have to face His wrath and judgment if we will trust in and obey Him!

"That You May Grow Thereby..."

A weekly Bible reading plan



Jeremiah 49-52; Lamentations 1-5

A Funeral for a City

Overview

The final chapters of Jeremiah's prophecy round out his prophecies against the nations, and retell once more the devastating destruction of Jerusalem. While several nations received warnings of coming judgment, none received stronger words than Babylon. While God had used Babylon to punish Judah, Babylon's own evil would not go unchecked. Two lengthy chapters are dedicated to Babylon's complete and utter downfall because of her pride, idolatry, and wickedness. The final chapter of Jeremiah retells in vivid detail the destruction of Jerusalem, in which the Temple was burned, the walls destroyed, and more people were carried off captive. The final verses of Jeremiah's prophecy record that Jehoiachin was released from prison and well cared for as an exile in Babylon. This must have been a ray of hope. While Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed, the line of David still lived, and thus there was hope. God had punished Judah, but He was still working to fulfill His covenant promise.

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Jeremiah 49-50

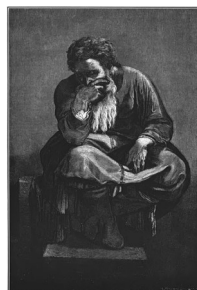
Tuesday: Jeremiah 51-52

Wednesday: Lamentations 1-2

Thursday: Lamentations 3

Friday: Lamentations 4-5

Lamentations: A Funeral for a City



In our English Bibles, the book of Lamentations comes immediately after the book of Jeremiah and is thus considered one of the books of prophecy. In many ways, however, it is more similar to the poetic and wisdom literature of the Old Testament. The book does not claim an author, but ancient tradition and many conservative scholars agree that Jeremiah is the most likely author. Lamentations is a collection of five poems or songs that are laments or dirges. They tell of and lament the fall and destruction of Jerusalem. As the book of Jeremiah looks ahead and *warns* of Jerusalem's destruction, Lamentations looks back and *mourns* the fate of the city and people. Jerusalem is personified, and the poems act like a funeral dirge lamenting the passing of a loved one. In many ways, Lamentations is one of the darkest books of the Bible. It vividly portrays the destruction of Jerusalem, and despair seems to drip from almost every verse. Lamentations is an outpouring of emotion, but it is done in a very thought-out and articulate way. We don't see it in our English translations, but each of the first four chapters are acrostic poems, working their way through the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Thus, raw emotion meets elaborate structure in this book, showing that there are important lessons to be learned.

God is Just: God is pictured as the One who let Jerusalem fall, but He is just in doing so. He is "*in the right*" (1:18) and has "*carried out his word*" (2:17). It was Judah that rebelled (3:42), not God who failed. He had promised in His covenant that sin would bring destruction, and He was true to His Word.

Sin's Consequences: Jerusalem's destruction should serve as a warning to all of the devastating effect of sin. Israel was God's chosen people; Jerusalem the site of His Temple. Even still, He allowed the destruction of the city and temple and captivity of His people when they continued in sin.

Christians today should take these lessons to heart, and seek to avoid sin, which shatters our relationship with God, at all costs!

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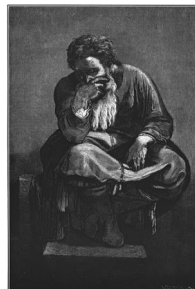
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