

Lamentations: Jesus our Weeping Redeemer

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Apparently Lamentations was written soon after Jerusalem's destruction recorded by Jeremiah in the book that bares his name in the 39th and 52nd chapters. Most believe that he wrote these five songs or poems before he was taken to Egypt by those who hated him. Jerusalem fell on July 19th 586 B.C. and the temple was burned on August 15th but though for 47 years Jeremiah wrote of the certainty of the events he was still brokenhearted at there happening when all could have been avoided. Some folks describe this book as a funeral for a city that has Jeremiahs tears upon each and every word as he looked out at a city that had been designed to be the center of the worship of God and was now totally destroyed as were the lives of the people who once sang God's praises. It appears that to Jeremiah the saddest event in the human experience is not the loss of life it is rather a wasted life one that abandons what they were designed to do (worship God) to follow after things that can never fill the void left in the heart that once placed God on its throne.

Throughout these five chapters three themes run strong:

1. **Crying**: Over eight times Jeremiah describes his weeping over the fulfillment of the word's God had him speak for 47 years to the nation.

2. **Confession**: The second theme of these five poems is confession as Jeremiah confesses the sins of the nations as well as agrees with God's righteous judgment.
3. **Confidence**: Finally throughout these five chapters Jeremiah espouses confidence in God, verses such as 3:26 where he says, "*It is good the one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.*"

Lamentations was for the most part (all but the 5th chapter) written in a poetic structure known as acrostic which the first letter of the first word starts with the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet and then vertically descends with the next letter through out all 22 letter that make up the Hebrew alphabet. Except for the third chapter where it has 66 verses and uses 22 groups of 3's using the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The fifth chapter doesn't follow the acrostic pattern but does have 22 verses. In the Septuagint version of Lamentation there is a brief reference to Jeremiah reading these words as he sat on a hill overlooking the destroyed Jerusalem. If that be the case then we can immediately see the parallel to Jesus as we read in Matthew 23:37 that Jesus on the week before He went to the cross went to the Mount of Olives facing the city with tears streaming down His face said, "*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!*" I was listening to a song by Phil Wickham called "True Love" which mirrors both Jeremiah and Jesus where he sings "*All creation felt the Father's broken heart tears were filling heaven's eyes the day that true love died, the day that true love died. When blood and water hit the ground, walls we couldn't move came crashing down we were free and made alive, the day that true love died, the day that true love died*".

I. Chapter 1 Hymn of heartbreak

The first poem Jeremiah describes the depth of his sorrow and loneliness he felt as he sat overlooking the city. He opens up in 1:1 saying, *“How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow is she, who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces has become a slave!”* Jeremiah laments what once was and now was no more all because the people of the city chose the people of the world instead of God. This has led Jeremiah to notice that *“All her splendor has departed”* (1:6) because *“Jerusalem has sinned grievously....she did not consider her destiny”* (1:8-9). Oh how often we fail to understand our destiny, we are children of the King, no longer beggars scrounging around our lives defending every little scrap of security. Jeremiah in 1:16 sets the record right as he declares, *“For these things I weep; my eye, my eye overflows with water; because the comforter, who should restore my life, is far from me. My children are desolate because the enemy prevailed.”* Oh dear ones as Jeremiah sat on the Mount of Olives looking at a city destroyed because of sin he wept not at just the loss of things, NO he grieved over the severed fellowship that had put a distance between His God who loved His people and the people who removed themselves from His love. Ah but notice in 1:18 that unlike so many of us Jeremiah doesn't blame God no he says, *“The Lord is righteous, for I rebelled against His commandment.”* Then in 1:20 Jeremiah confess before the Lord saying, *“See, O Lord, that I am in distress; my soul is troubled; my heart is overturned within me, for I have been very rebellious.”* It is impossible that God is wrong even in His judgment, though it seemed sever to all onlookers. It is impossible for any of us to be more compassionate and caring thing God even in the midst of the hardest of times. There will never be a time where we will be able to instruct or correct God no

matter what the situation or circumstance. If there was such a thing as “instant replay” in heaven where we could play back the situations of our lives all such observations no matter how many angels and times we looked at the events in question all we would see is how fair, just and compassionate God was in dealing with us.

II. Chapters 2 Broken people

In the 2nd chapter Jeremiah is made more aware of God’s righteous judgment. In 2:6-7 we read that God, *“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. The Lord has spurned His altar, He has abandoned His sanctuary; He has given up the walls of her palaces into the hand of the enemy.”* Why would He do such an action? To cause those who had long ago abandoned the House of the Lord to long for it again. In 2:9b we read that *“The Law is no more, and her prophets find no vision from the Lord.”* Such things caused Jeremiah’s *“eyes to fail with tears, and his heart to be troubled”* (2:11). Jeremiah wrote in 2:14 that Jerusalem’s *“prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not uncovered your iniquity, to bring back your captives, but have envisioned for you false prophecies and delusions.”* The city had heaped up for themselves teachers who would tell them what they wanted to hear. And as such now all who walked by the city asked, *“Is this the city called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?”* Those who the city gathered to tell them what they wanted to hear now saw a city where we are told in 2:17 that *“The Lord has done what He purposed; He has fulfilled His word which He commanded in days of old.”* For 490 years Israel lived in the land of promise yet they refused to give the land rest on the 7th

year as God had commanded so God was going to fulfill that promise by giving the land 70 years of rest while they were captive.

III. Chapters 3 Suffering servant

In this chapter we read of Jeremiah's personal pain and in the midst of such pain he praises God for His faithfulness. He says in 3:1 *"I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath."* And then in 3:4 Jeremiah says, *"He has aged my flesh and my skin, and broken my bones."* And in 3:7-9 *"He has hedged me in so that I cannot get out; He has made my chain heavy. Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer. He has blocked my ways with hewn stone; He has made my paths crooked."* Such words could have been said of Jesus on our behalf. Yet in the midst of such personal anguish and suffering Jeremiah breaks forth in 3:22-26 great words of hope saying, *"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."* And again Jeremiah writes of the Messiah in 3:28-30 *"Let him sit alone and keep silent, because God has laid it on him; let him put his mouth in the dust--there may yet be hope. Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him, and be full of reproach."* Listen to Jeremiah's answer to what he has gone through in 3:37-42 *"Who is he who speaks and it comes to pass, when the Lord has not commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that woe and well-being proceed? Why should a living man complain, A man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the*

Lord; let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven. We have transgressed and rebelled; You have not pardoned.”

IV. Chapters 4 Four stages of grief

In the 4th chapter Jeremiah takes us through the four stages of grief:

- **Desolation**
- **Despair**
- **Disbelief**
- **Denial**

In 4:1 Jeremiah looks out upon where the temple used to be and says, *“How the gold has become dim! How changed the fine gold! The stones of the sanctuary are scattered at the head of every street.”* As he looked out upon this once glorious city that had at its center the worship of God now in ruins despair hit his heart as he said in 4:6 *“The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, with no hand to help her!”* Those who had taken Nazirite vows had become unrecognizable and *“Those who were slain by the sword were better off than those who die of hunger”* (4:9) says Jeremiah. All of this would go on unto *“Then punishment of their iniquity is accomplished”*, (4:22).

V. Chapters 5 Prayer for restoration

In the final chapter Jeremiah believes that God’s righteous judgment has finally broken the nation so that now God can and will restore His people. Jeremiah starts out in 5:1 saying to the Lord, *“Remember, O Lord, what has come upon us; look, and behold our reproach!”* Then in 5:7-9 *“Our fathers sinned and are no more, but we bear their iniquities. Servants rule over us; there is none to deliver us from their hand. We get our*

bread at the risk of our lives, because of the sword in the wilderness.” Jeremiah concludes with these words in 5:15-17 *“The joy of our heart has ceased; our dance has turned into mourning. The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned! Because of this our heart is faint; because of these things our eyes grow dim”*. Finally Jeremiah says in, 5:19-22 *“You, O Lord, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation. Why do You forget us forever, and forsake us for so long a time? Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; renew our days as of old, unless You have utterly rejected us, and are very angry with us!”* Ray Stedman wrote, *God can use even our pain and sorrow. As we face up to the lessons of this life, as we add our laments to the great lamentations of Jeremiah, we grow deeper and stronger in the qualities that truly count in this life and the life to come:*

- **Faith**
- **Courage**
- **Obedience**

God never does anything without a purpose. Praise God, you and I are a part of His plan, His purpose. Whatever our pain and grief today, we know that a day is coming when we will share in His final victory.