



Lamentations: God of Tears

Memory Verse: Lamentations 5:21 "Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old"

Background

Lamentations is the 25th book of the Bible and the third book of the major prophets. Though no author is named, both Jewish and Christian tradition ascribe authorship to Jeremiah around the year 586 B.C. Lamentations, like Psalms, is composed not of chapters but of individual poems. However, while the book of Psalms is a collection of diverse poems written over the ages, the five poems in Lamentations comprise a single, unified book.

The original name of the book in Hebrew can be translated "Alas!" or "How", giving the sense of weeping or lamenting over some sad event. The book of Lamentations combined with the Scripture passage in Jeremiah 9:1 which says "Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people," earned Jeremiah the title "The Weeping Prophet."

The Short Story

While Jeremiah mourns over the sin of Judah and the severity of God's judgment, he can see hope in God's mercy.

What's the Big Idea?

As the verses of Lamentations accumulate, readers cannot help but wonder how many different ways Jeremiah could describe the desolation of the once proud city of Jerusalem. Children begged food from their mothers (Lamentations 2:12), young men and women were cut down by swords (2:21), and formerly compassionate mothers used their children for food (4:10). Even the city's roads mourned over its condition (1:4)! Jeremiah could not help but acknowledge the abject state of this city, piled with rubble.

The pain so evident in Jeremiah's reaction to this devastation clearly communicates the significance of the terrible condition in Jerusalem. Speaking in the first person, Jeremiah pictured himself captured in a besieged city, without anyone to hear his prayers, and as a target for the arrows of the enemy (3:7–8, 12). Yet even in this seemingly hopeless situation, he somehow found hope in the Lord (3:21–24).

It might have been easy for Jeremiah to say "I told you so" because he had tried to warn Judah of God's judgment and their impending captivity. Instead, all he could do was to weep honest tears, straining with the sufferers to bring all the pain to God.

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God's purpose for the book?

Like the book of Job, Lamentations pictures a man of God puzzling over the results of evil and suffering in the world. However, while Job dealt with unexplained evil, Jeremiah lamented a tragedy entirely of Jerusalem's making. The people of this once great city experienced the judgment of the holy God, and the results were devastating. But at the heart of this book, at the center of this lament over the effects of sin in the world, sit a few verses devoted to hope in the Lord. Lamentations 3:22–25 states, "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.' The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;" This statement of faith standing strong in the midst of the surrounding darkness shines as a beacon to all those suffering under the consequences of their own sin and disobedience.

**Material taken from various sources.*

Teaching Text

Lamentations 3:21-24 “Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope.²² Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴ I say to myself, “The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.”

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

- Even though Jeremiah was in despair he still had hope. Why?
- What did he have to remind himself over and over again?
- What keeps us from experiencing the full wrath of God?
- What never fails according to the passage? Why is it so important?

Practical Application

- Why does Jeremiah remind us of His renewed promises every morning?
- What do you need to remind yourself about God?
- Where do you need to be more positive and hopeful in your outlook towards life?
- Where and when has God spared you out of love and mercy?
- How do you feel about “His compassion never fails”?
- What does His faithfulness mean to you on a personal level?

Hitting the Highpoints

- 1:16 “This is why I weep and my eyes overflow with tears...because the enemy has prevailed.”
- 2:14 “The vision of your prophets were false...they did not expose your sin to ward off your captivity.”
- 3:22 “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed for His compassion never fails.”
- 4:11 “The Lord has given full vent to His wrath; He has poured out His fierce anger...”
- 5:21 “Restore to us yourself, oh Lord, that we may restore; renew our days of old...”

Bonus Features

Where is Jesus? The book of Lamentations gives us a glimpse of who Jesus is...Lamentations 1:3 says that Judah can find no rest. Jesus says in Matthew 11 that if we will come to Him, He will give us rest. Lamentations 1:6 says that Judah's princes are like deer that have found no pasture. In John 10, Jesus says that He is the Door and if anyone enters through Him, they will find pasture. Lamentations 1:9 says that Jerusalem has fallen and has no comforter. In John 14, Jesus says that He gives us The Comforter, who will be with us forever. Lamentations paints a vivid picture of destruction - the devastating consequences of sin and a life lived apart from Him. But lingering beneath the rubble is the theme of the hope and restoration we find only in His faithful son, Jesus who, like Jeremiah, wept over our separation from God and who intercedes on our behalf.

Personal Takeaways and Notes