

INTRO REMARKS:

- Charles Dyer: “The Book of Lamentations is a mournful postscript to the Book of Jeremiah. Through the use of five dirges, or funeral laments, the author grieved over the fate of Jerusalem because of her sin.”

Lamentations

A. Introduction

1. Title

a. Hebrew: “How”

Lam 1:1 How lonely sits the city that was full of people! She has become like a widow Who was *once* great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a forced laborer!

b. Talmud: “Lamentations”

c. LXX & Vulgate: “Tears”

2. Date: 586 B.C.

➤ The setting:

- From about 588-586 BC, Babylon systematically crushed Judah and the surrounding cities of Jerusalem

¹ Notes prepared with help of The Master’s Seminary BI 501 Bible Survey syllabus.

3. Canonical Connection: between Ecclesiastes and Esther or between Ruth and Ecclesiastes

B. Outline

- The first 4 chapters are acrostics: each verse begins w/ the consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
1. 1st Lament: Jerusalem's Desolation because of Her Sin (1)
 2. 2nd Lament: God's Punishment of Jerusalem's Sin (2)
 3. 3rd Lament: Jeremiah's Response (3)
 4. 4th Lament: The Lord's Anger (4)
 5. 5th Lament: The Remnant's Response (5)

C. Major Themes

1. The Pain of Yahweh's Servant (1:2, 16, 18, 20-21; 2:11; 3:1, 4, 12, 48; 5:15)

Lam 1:3 Judah has gone into exile under affliction and under harsh servitude; she dwells among the nations, *but* she has found no rest; all her pursuers have overtaken her in the midst of distress.

Lam 2:11 My eyes fail because of tears, My spirit is greatly troubled; My heart is poured out on the earth because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, when little ones and infants faint In the streets of the city.

Lam 3:48 My eyes run down with streams of water because of the destruction of the daughter of my people.

2. The Holiness of Yahweh in Judgment

Deuteronomy 28:49-53 “The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, ⁵⁰ a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. ⁵¹ “Moreover, it shall eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. ⁵² “It shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the LORD your God has given you. ⁵³ “Then you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you.

3. The Sovereignty of Yahweh in Judgment (1:5, 14-15, 17; 2:1-8, 17; 3:37-38, 43-44; 4:11)

Lam 2:2-3 The Lord has swallowed up; He has not spared all the habitations of Jacob. In His wrath He has thrown down The strongholds of the daughter of Judah; He has brought *them* down to the ground; He has profaned the kingdom and its princes. ³ In fierce anger He has cut off all the strength of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand From before the enemy. And He has burned in Jacob like a flaming fire consuming round about.

Lam 3:37-38 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded *it*? ³⁸ *Is it* not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and ill go forth?

Lam 5:19 You, O LORD, rule forever; Your throne is from generation to generation.

- a. The Anger of Yahweh (1:12; 2:1-4, 21-22; 3:43; 4:11)
 - b. The Righteousness of Yahweh (1:18)
4. The Perplexity of Suffering (2:29, 5:20, etc.)

Lam 2:20 See, O LORD, and look! With whom have You dealt thus? Should women eat their offspring, the little ones who were born healthy? Should priest and prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?

Lamentations 5:20 Why do You forget us forever? Why do You forsake us so long?

5. The Sin of God's People (1:5, 8-9, 18; 4:6, 13; 5:7)

Lam 2:14 Your prophets have seen for you false and foolish *visions*; and they have not exposed your iniquity so as to restore you from captivity, but they have seen for you false and misleading oracles.

6. The Arrogance of the Enemy (1:21-22; 2:15-17; 3:60-66; 4:21-22)

Lam 2:15 All who pass along the way Clap their hands *in derision* at you; They hiss and shake their heads At the daughter of Jerusalem, “Is this the city of which they said, ‘The perfection of beauty, A joy to all the earth’?”

7. The Hope of God’s Mercy & Restoration (3:19-36; 5:21)

a. Even in wrath, he is a God of mercy

Lam 3:22 The LORD’S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail.

Lam 3:32 For if He causes grief, then He will have compassion according to His abundant lovingkindness.

b. The need for humility before God in such circumstances

Lam 3:25–29 The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him. ²⁶ *It is good that he waits silently for the salvation of the LORD.* ²⁷ *It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke in his youth.* ²⁸ Let him sit alone and be silent since He has laid *it* on him. ²⁹ Let him put his mouth in the dust, perhaps there is hope.

Lam 3:40–41 Let us examine and probe our ways, and let us return to the LORD. ⁴¹ We lift up our heart and hands toward God in heaven;

- Key principle: Yahweh’s judgment on Israel never means Yahweh’s abandonment of his people due to Yahweh’s faithfulness to his word.
 - The Abrahamic covenant **stands**, as does the awaited New Covenant.
- D. Purpose: Yahweh’s servant lamented Jerusalem’s great destruction caused by her sin and he gave a statement of repentance with a hope of restoration.
- E. The Literary Structure

LAMENTATIONS

The First Lament: The Devastation of Jerusalem	The Second Lament: The Lord’s Punishment of Jerusalem’s Sin	The Third Lament: The Grief of Jeremiah Expressed	The Fourth Lament: The Lord’s Wrath Detailed	The Final Poem: The Prayer of the Remnant
“How” (1:1)	“How” (2:1)	“I am the man” (3:1)	“How” (4:1)	“Remember” (5:1)
1:1 1:22	2:1 2:22	3:1 3:66	4:1 4:22	5:1 5:22

F. Bibliography

1. *Jeremiah and Lamentations: Judgment and Grace*, John MacArthur
2. *The Message of Lamentations*, Christopher Wright
3. Exegetical: Garrett/House, *Song of Songs/Lamentations* (WBC).