

Lamentations

Intro: Tonight we embark on the 24th book of the bible...the book of lamentations...

Context and Background: - Lamentations takes place around 587 b.c. after the city of Jerusalem had been brought to ruin by the kingdom of Babylon...according to extra-biblical Jewish writings Jeremiah wrote this weeping and hiding in a cave

- A.** *The fall of Judah took place over a span of about 20 years.*

- B.** *In 605 B.C. the Babylonians came into the city of Jerusalem. And without a fight they took king Jehoiakim back to Babylon. And they also brought with them part of the vessels of the house of the Lord.*
 - a)** *Now little side note – you might remember how a king, a Godly king, named Hezekiah - he actually allowed some Babylonian ambassadors to come in and see all of the treasury of Judah.*

 - b)** *Those ambassadors – they went back to Babylon with word of what treasures were there. And they never forgot about them...And so when they show up, and they're about to take Jehoiakim back with them to Babylon as a prisoner, they remembered there were treasures in the house of the Lord. And so they took a big part of them and brought them back to the palace of Nebuchadnezzar.*

 - c)** *They also took with them - and this is very important – the best and the brightest young men of Judah*

- C.** *About eight years later the Babylonians came back to Jerusalem because another king named Jehoiachin had stopped paying tribute to Babylon. And he was beginning to forge political ties with Egypt so that Egypt could help them resist the Babylonian Empire that was quickly becoming the dominant geo-political power in the region. So*

the Babylonians came back to re-inforce their dominion in the southern kingdom.

D. And this resulted in a second deportation in around 597 B.C.
The prophet Ezekiel was taken to Babylon in the second deportation.

a) Daniel's in the first deportation. Ezekiel's in the second deportation.

E. Ten years after the second deportation a king by the name of Zedekiah was on the throne of Judah. *would do the same thing and Babylon comes again and says "We're done with you."*

a) *In 585 B.C., after the eighteen-month siege, the Babylonians breached the walls of Jerusalem. The magnificent temple, built by Solomon, was destroyed. And the city of Jerusalem was reduced to smoldering rubble.*

b) So that's the backdrop against which Jeremiah penned this little book

c) *The name "Lamentations" is taken from the Hebrew word "Alas" or "How" which is a common word we use when tragedy strikes*

F. THE FORM OF THE BOOK – *Now the book of Lamentations was actually written in the form of an acrostic poem*

1. There are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. *Chapters 1,2,3,4 each have 22 verses – a verse for a letter... Verse 1 of those chapters starts with the Hebrew equivalent of 'A' in our alphabet. Verse 2 starts with the Hebrew equivalent of 'B' in our alphabet, and so forth All the way until you come to the 22nd verse, which would be their final letter – the 'Z', if you would, in their alphabet.*

2. **Chapter 3** consists of 3 poems in its 66 verses and the whole book crescendoes with chapter 5:23 which we will read in a while
 - a) The acrostic form in Hebrew writing was primarily to aid in memorization, being able to memorize a verse by the first letter in the verse.
3. **Now theres a little twist** – Chapter 5 has 22 verses. But it's not an acrostic...It's as if Jeremiah got to this writing this and he just couldn't keep himself together

G. **WHATS THE THEME OF THE BOOK?** - Charles Swindoll says this about it *"The book of Lamentations highlights the other side of the "eat, drink, be merry" coin"* This book is about wages of sin...

Chapter 1 - Divides into two sections. In the first half of chapter 1, the **first 11 verses** – It's a weeping for the city... **Then Verse 12** to the end of the chapter – it begins with the city speaking. The inhabitants of the city are figuratively now weeping for their own condition.

Lamentations 1:1–2 (ESV) 1 How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become, she who was great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a slave. 2 She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies.

Here we see the word "How" the characteristic cry of the Hebrew lament. But, guys, even though the word "How" here is declaration;... It begs the question – **"How did they get to this place?"**

How is it that Jeremiah is sitting in a cave weeping his eyes out? How is that the city lies in ruins? How is that she has come to this state? How did the city so full of people come to be so empty?

*Lamentations 1:5 (ESV) 5 Her foes have become the head; her enemies prosper, **because the LORD has afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions**; her children have gone away, captives before the foe.*

So why did, they become servants to Babylon?... Because of the “multitude of their transgressions” or in other words “Because of the many times they chose to cross beyond the boundaries of what God permitted them to do... Sin has brought about captivity

A. We see this all the time right - Lives destroyed by sin

B. How does this happen?

*1. It's not because of a Lack of knowledge - **John 3:19 (ESV) ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. Sin gets the best of us because it feels good for a season...***

*2. Yet Jesus calls us to Hate sin! - **Romans 12:9 (ESV) ⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.***

*a) **But in our own strength can't Hate sin...thats why the what Jesus was so important** - He brought the new covenant where God though his Spirit would write the Law on our hearts...*

(1) Now...His Spirit now is in us and as we make a discipline of reading God's word...He convicts us and teaches us to hate evil

*(2) **Psalm 119:104 (ESV) ¹⁰⁴ Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.***

Here's another reason...

*Lamentations 1:9 (ESV) ⁹ Her uncleanness was in her skirts; **she took no thought of her future**; therefore her fall is terrible; she has no comforter. "O Lord, behold my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!"*

Jeremiah at the condition of the people because...while in the clutches of sin they had forgotten their destiny as a people...they failed to stop and consider their destiny as a people; they failed to consider what they had been created for; they failed to consider why they existed.

Listen to what God has to say about Israel...

A. Deuteronomy 7:6–8 (ESV) ⁶ "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

B. Deuteronomy 10:14–15 (ESV) ¹⁴ Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. ¹⁵ Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.

C. God would refer to them as the apple of His eye in Zechariah 2, not only did they have a unique place in the heart of God; it would be through this nation that God would bring the Savior of the world.

1. They forgot...sin does that

*2. **App:** For you...Jesus has got a future for you as well!*

- a) ***That you might have an abundant life*** - how? through being confirmed to the image of Jesus - we were created to be as when we are being conformed to the image of Jesus
- (1) *C. S. Lewis said this – “The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become; because He made us; He invented us.”*
- b) ***That we might be with Him*** - One day Jesus is going to come for us. I love this! John 14:3 – it’s the night before He’s going to die on the cross for the sins of the world. And He’s telling His friends - ³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*
- (1) *That future expectation should cause us to persevere as christians* ¹ *John 3:2–3 (ESV)* ² *Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.* ³ ***And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.***
- (2) ***Jesus’ coming should produce a purity in us*** - Like a bride or groom getting ready for their wedding day

Chapter 2 – This chapter focuses on the anger of the Lord.

Lamentations 2:1–4 (ESV) ¹ *How the Lord in his anger has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud! He has cast down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel; he has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger.* ² *The Lord has swallowed up without mercy all the habitations of Jacob; in his wrath he has broken down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; he has brought down to the ground in dishonor the kingdom and its rulers.* ³ *He has cut down in fierce anger all the might of Israel; he has withdrawn from them his right hand in the face of the enemy; he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob, consuming all around.* ⁴ *He has bent his*

bow like an enemy, with his right hand set like a foe; and he has killed all who were delightful in our eyes in the tent of the daughter of Zion; he has poured out his fury like fire.

Lamentations 2:8 (ESV) ⁸ The Lord determined to lay in ruins the wall of the daughter of Zion; he stretched out the measuring line; he did not restrain his hand from destroying; he caused rampart and wall to lament; they languished together.

This chapter focuses on the anger of God that was poured out. And it was poured out because – they didn't consider their future; they didn't consider their destiny.

God says, "This is what I've got planned for you." And they said, "Nope; don't want that."

A. A lot of people go – "I don't like that God of the Old Testament. He's mad. I don't like Him. I'm not happy with Him being angry" But think about it... You should be concerned if God isn't angry at sin

- 1. Think about this – The more you love somebody, the angrier you get with them when they're doing something that hurts them. Ask any parent. When they start seeing their kids doing something that's destructive, self-destructive, that's going to hurt them, that's going to ruin them, you start getting angry. The truth is – The less I love somebody, the more tolerant I am when I see them doing things that hurt them.*
- 2. Anger is not the opposite of love...hate is...and when hate is fully it becomes indifference...*

So Jeremiah is lamenting over the broken condition of the city but he also alludes to the Solution...

Lamentations 2:19 (ESV) ¹⁹ "Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the night watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street."

Guys, lifting up of hands is the universal sign of surrender, right?... The real problem is sin...transgression...we want to be boss...but the healing when you go, "I surrender." "I surrender."

A. C. S. Lewis said this – speaking of his conversion – “What I heard was God saying, “Put down your gun; and we’ll talk.””

Chapter 3 – *this is the long chapter...and it’s a big one; and it’s the takeaway.*

Lamentations 3:19 (ESV) ¹⁹ Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall!

Lamentations 3:21 (ESV) ²¹ But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

Jeremiah is at the point of being overwhelmed by his grief over the city and its ruins...yet right here we see he does what we should do when we’re in that state

A. Number One - He pours out his heart

B. Number Two - He remembers God’s word...

Lamentations 3:22–26 (ESV) ²² The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴ “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” ²⁵ The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. ²⁶ It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Listen, here’s how trouble looks in my world:

A. I’m trouble. My heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, and I can’t know it

B. *Sin is deceitful. It blinds me to the point where I don't even see that I'm blind*

C. *And I have a very real adversary the Devil.*

1. **App:** *So how do we get out of trouble? How do we get out of difficulty? We cry out to the Lord... We look into the pages of His Word. and we obey them...*

That's exactly what's happening in Jeremiah's life. Get this picture, guys – Here's a man sitting in a cave. He literally smells the stench of death. He's watching smoke rise over the rubble that was once a glorious city. He's watching men and women, not only being marched off into captivity; but he knows they're being led into captivity knowing that God had so much more for them. And he says...

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It's easy when we're in pain, to begin to see the world through that lens

It's 'hesed' – covenant love, the relentless, pursuing covenant love of God.

A. **App:** *Guys, when you and I find ourselves in a cave looking at the world through tears our cave does not define God...our cave does not define God's love...we need to remember that the LORD's love is – steadfast, relentless, unfailing, even when ours isn't, even when the love of others isn't; we need to remember that His mercies are new every morning.*

B. *They greet us when we wake up. The sun will never rise without God's fresh mercy there to meet us.*

- C. **App:** *We need to remind each other about this...because it can get dark in the cave...sometimes we need someone to pull us out of the cave and tell us...God's love is steady*

And look at how Jeremiah responds to that...

Lamentations 3:40–41 (ESV) ⁴⁰ Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord! ⁴¹ Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven:

That's the proper response to God's mercy.

Chapter 4 *Jeremiah contrasts – who the people were before this devastation, with who they've become*

Lamentations 4:2 (ESV) ² The precious sons of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold, how they are regarded as earthen pots, the work of a potter's hands!

Vessels of gold were rare. But they were common in the temple. There in the temple of God those golden vessels took on infinite value because they were – used in the service of God's house, used in the worship of God.

- A. **App:** *And it's amazing how we rarely consider – that sin devalues our lives, that sin devalues the vessels that God saved us to be. We will look at sin differently when we consider how sin makes that which is precious to God as worthless as a clay pot that can be so easily broken and tossed out.*

1. *Chapter 4 reminds us of the blunt consequences of sin - It will cost you...but over this whole chapter I wrote Jeremiah 29:11 - **11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.***

2. *Jesus wants the rose*

Chapter 5 - *There's a plea for Restoration*

Lamentations 5:21–22 (ESV) ²¹ Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old— ²² unless you have utterly rejected us, and you remain exceedingly angry with us.

Jeremiah while in this cave he's seen first hand the power and consequences of Sin and he begins to say "Restore us...Restore us to yourself Lord...Renew our days!...I've seen how far we've fallen...is this it for us? have you rejected us?"

That's how the book ends...

A. *So would the Lord reject them forever? - Here's something a little wild...Jewish Tradition holds that this cave that Jeremiah was lamenting in...This cave where Jeremiah was wondering God was ever gonna forgive them...**is Just feet away from the Golgotha where Jesus was crucified***

1. **How would God restore sinners to himself?** - *John 1:12 (ESV) ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God*

2. **How would God renew our days** - *2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV) ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

a) **App:** *If you are like Israel...in need of restoration...Jesus is your only hope*