

## LAMENTATIONS

- Between 606-586BC, Jeremiah (“the Lord Exalts”) grieved the loss of Jerusalem who he tried so hard to save. A man who is witnessing a generation slip into sin and judgment as he faces his own personal pain.
  - Lamentations records the historical reality of sin and judgment
  - Lamentations gives a model of the way that God deals with sin in the lives of His people
  - This book is constructed of five Psalms/Lamentations that show the way unbelievers find God in the middle of terrible circumstances
  - In Hebrew, the book is called “ECHAH” which is like a gasp, a sigh, “alas” of Yiddish word “OY”. (so sad that there are no words to describe it). It has been said that there is no way to take away pain...only to share pain.
- The 22-verse outline of each chapter represent the effects of sin
  - Four chapters in Lamentations are acrostic with each verse beginning with a character of the 22 letter Hebrew alphabet in sequence.
  - The central chapter (chapter 3) consists of 66 verses with each letter being used three times.
  - Chapter 5 has 22 verses, but is not an acrostic.

Outline of Lamentations	
Chapter 1	God’s Holiness Will Have Consequences (No renegotiation)
Chapter 2	Recognize the Peril of Sin & Man’s Natural Sinful State
Chapter 3	God’s Intervention (Man Cannot Make It Without God)
Chapter 4	Truth Has Not Been Forgotten; Trust the Justice of God
Chapter 5	The Only Success Comes From Surrender; The Only Hope Is Our Redeemer

- The author is not identified in the book called Lamentations. The first and second lamentations are feminine while the third is masculine; the fourth and fifth are eyewitness accounts of Jerusalem's destruction.
- Outside of the numeric verse separations, chapters 1 & 2 can be divided into sets of 3 verses that are acrostics. Chapter 3 can be reduced to a list of a single letter. Chapters 4 & 5 can be divided into sets of two verses that are acrostics.

Ancient Scripture Translations		
Timeframe	Title	Definition
Began 250 BC	Septuagint “LXX”	Jewish Scholars translated from the Hebrew to Greek Language
1 <sup>st</sup> Century AD	Targum	Aramaic (language of Persia) paraphrase of the Hebrew Bible
400AD	Vulgate	Jerome translated from the Greek sources into Latin
5 <sup>th</sup> Century	Peshitta	Consistent translation into Syriac/Aramaic from Greek manuscripts
9 <sup>th</sup> Century AD (800 years after Christ)	Masoretic Hebrew Text “MT”	Jewish Scholars inserted vowels into the Hebrew scripture of consonants (for fear of the spoken Hebrew language being lost)

- Jews include the book of “Lamentations” in the Megillot
  - There are Five Megillot (“Scrolls”) that are a section of the Ketuvim (“Writings”).

- Each book in the Megillot is read aloud at a Jewish celebration throughout the year
- Lamentations is a dirge recited in the evening and morning services of the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av. It grieves the destruction of Jerusalem and the First and Second Temples.

Jewish Feasts When the Megillot Books Are Read Aloud				
1.	Passover	Nisan 14-21	March-April	Song of Solomon
2.	Shavuot/Pentecost	Sivan 6	May-June	Ruth
3.	9 <sup>th</sup> of Av	Av 9	July-August	Lamentations
4.	Sukkot/Tabernacles	Tishri 15-22	September-October	Ecclesiastes
5.	Purim	Adar 14-15	February-March	Esther

## 10 Lamentations 1, 2

### Read Lamentations 1:1-11... The Sin and Miseries of Jerusalem

- 1:1 Jerusalem/Zion is represented as a widow contrasted to a prostitute, Babylon (Rev 18:7); the city is lonely due to lack of inhabitants and lack of friendly allied nations
- The opening word “how” (’êkâh הֵכָה) is often used in Hebrew to begin laments and chants of grief.
  - Jerusalem had walked away from God for worldly alliances and worship of neighboring gods; now the worldly alliances had rejected them, and Israel had been exiled into loneliness away any friends and fellowship.
  - God’s relationship was often represented as a man and his wife.
- 1:2 Jerusalem’s “friends” (worldly alliances) had been Assyria and Egypt who had now abandoned her. The political alliances had evaporated. Judah had been taken into captivity in Babylon to serve against Egypt.
- The first sign/marker of sin’s consequences is broken relationships.
- 1:3 Babylon utilized Judah’s exiles as slave labor to work the canals and crops.
- The second sign/marker of sin’s consequences is lost status.
- 1:4 The actual roads of Jerusalem would mourn the solace without feasts and festivals. There were no longer pilgrims and travelers coming into the lonely city.
- The roads of Jerusalem are so narrow that stores must be stocked by carts, but the exiles had been moved to the hot open plains of Babylon.
  - Another sign/marker of sin’s consequences is “dead” worship; God’s people continue to live in sin while asking for forgiveness.
    - Worship should be an act of sacrificial giving of one’s self to God instead of attempting to coerce God into giving something to the individual.
  - The gates were the marketplaces and judicial sites of the elders (where marriage contracts would be made), but the gate activities had ceased.
  - The priests had no place to officiate, no one to lead, and God was far off.
    - Another sign/marker of sin’s consequences is “no” good leaders
  - The phrase “*virgins are afflicted*” references virgins who were raped. The young women who were cultic dancers had been stopped (Jeremiah 31:4, 13; Psalm 68:25).

- 1:5 The afflictions of the Jews were punishment from the Lord because of Israel's transgressions. All of Judah had been exiled into Babylon including the children who represented the future of Israel (Deuteronomy 28:63-66).
- Another sign/marker of sin's consequences is there is no future.
- 1:6 Jerusalem had lost its majesty. Scripture represents God's people as deer who are dependent on Him (Psalm 18:33, 42:1), but these deer who had rejected the Lord were fleeing for their lives from hunters.
- 1:7 Jerusalem recalled the memories of the many blessings of God after she was judged for rebelling against Him.
- The Hebrew word for "adversary" is "satan."
  - Jerusalem's adversaries mocked and made fun of her destruction.
- 1:8 Because of Jerusalem's sin, her ugly wickedness became evident and apparent (as if naked) to every nation. She was so polluted that Jerusalem even turned from herself in disgust (Ezekiel 16).
- The word "unclean" is the Hebrew word "lənîdāh" (לְנִידָה) that infers "menstrual cloth" (Leviticus 15:13-20; Isaiah 64:6)
- 1:9 Jerusalem is compared to a woman in menstruation who gets blood on her clothes, so it is evident to everyone that she should be separated for a time according to law
- As there was astonishment of the exodus from Egypt, there is astonishment that Jerusalem has been exiled to Babylon.
  - Israel understands that God has witnessed their sin and now calls upon God to see how the enemy has exalted themselves in pride.
  - Another sign/marker of sin's consequences is personal guilt and shame.
- 1:10 The Babylonian army ransacked the Temple, removed the treasures into Babylon and destroyed it.
- Any Gentile going beyond the court of the Gentiles was killed on site, but pagans had plundered and destroyed the Holy Place as well as the Holy of Holies.
- 1:11 As the people attempt to save themselves, they trade anything and everything precious for food to eat.
- Israel understands that God has witnessed their sin and now calls upon God to see how they are despised.
  - **According to Lamentations 1:1, to what was Jerusalem compared?**
    - **Jerusalem is compared to a widow**
  - **According to Lamentations 1:5, who afflicted Judah?**
    - **The Lord afflicted Judah because of her transgressions**
  - **According to Lamentations 1:6, what animal is used to symbolize fear?**
    - **Deer**

### **Read Lamentations 1:12-17... Response of Action & Compassion Demanded of Beholders**

- **A change from the third person to the first person where Jerusalem begins talking about herself**
- 1:12 The pain of others was treated as nothing to the selfish Israelites, but when it became their pain, they asked others to witness and take action.
- 1:13 The infrastructure of Judea had been burned to the ground, and the "net" of the Lord kept the people from fleeing the destruction. 32:28-29 (Deut 13:12-18 → Jer 32:28-29, 34:2, 38:23, 39:8, 50:32; Lam 2:3)

- The phrase “sent fire into my bones” infers that God’s justice and judgment cuts to the inner part of man (Hebrews 4:12)
- 1:14 Jeremiah had forewarned Judah that Babylon would exile them into slavery (Jeremiah 28:13, 48).
- Jewish scholars have a unique interpretation in the Talmud of “*those against whom I am not able to stand.*”
    - When a Jewish Bride was married, she would bring a dowry from her father; if they couple was divorced, the groom must return the amount of the dowry to the father.
    - Scribes use this verse to mean that the groom would like a divorce, but he cannot afford to pay the dowry back to the father.
- 1:15 The wine press in the Bible is frequently symbolic of God’s judgment (Is 63:2). The picture of God walking in the wine press as the juice (blood) from the grapes is pressed out of them (Isaiah 63:1-6).
- There is a metaphor of an affectionate father towards his innocent daughter.
- 1:16 Israel has no one to comfort and safeguard them because they have rebelled against the Shepherd (Psalm 23:3)
- 1:17 The stretching out of hands heavenward is a common stance for a Jewish person in prayer.
- **According to Lamentations 1:7, what does Jerusalem do in her judgment and affliction?**
    - **Jerusalem reminisces on all of the good things in the past**
  - **According to Lamentations 1:8, how did Jerusalem become polluted and filthy?**
    - **Jerusalem sinned**
  - **According to Lamentations 1:14, what became a yoke for Jerusalem?**
    - **Their transgressions that were a heavy burden until they were exiled in chains.**
  - **According to Lamentations 1:17, what has the Lord commanded?**
    - **The neighbors of Judah should be their enemies**

### **Read Lamentations 1:18-22...God’s Justice Acknowledged w/ Prayers Against Ridiculers**

- 1:18 God’s people realize that God’s righteous judgment is a consequence of their rebellion. The Hebrew word for “righteous” (šaddîq שׁדִּיִּק) is straight; in ancient times a reed would be used to indicate straight alignment.
- 1:19 The “*lovers of Jerusalem*” could refer to her allies (e.g. Egypt) or her idols/false gods. Before coming to God, Jerusalem went to her political allies.
- The shepherds (priests, elders) were looking for food for themselves; they died attempting to take care of themselves.
- 1:20 The term “*greatly troubled*” relates to the bowels as Jews believed the intestines were the source of emotion. The heart was the central thought, attitude and will of the Hebrew individual; the “heart” represented the “essence of the person.”
- There was nowhere to go for safety; individuals died by the sword in the street and by the plague inside of their homes.
- 1:21 The enemies are glad that God has judged His people. Israel prays that God will treat their enemies with the harshness of their judgment.

- 1:22 Israel prays that God witnesses the wickedness of their enemies. Prayer for retribution for those who are glorying in the fall of Jerusalem
- **According to Lamentations 1:19, how did the priests and elders of Jerusalem die?**
    - **They starved to death from famine**
  - **According to Lamentations 1:21, what made Judah's enemies happy?**
    - **The Lord had brought trouble and judgment on Judah**

### **Read Lamentations 2:1-19... Jeremiah Laments Misery of Jerusalem**

- 2:1 The "Lord" is spelled with a lower case "r" which translates into Adonai; a capital "R" ("LORD") is translated as Yahweh which was the covenant name for God, but Israel had broken that covenant.
- The opening word "how" ('êkālāh הֵכֵל) is often used in Hebrew to begin laments and chants of grief.
  - "*Casting from heaven to earth*" is similar to the time when Satan was cast from heaven to earth (Isaiah 14:12-20); in the Isaiah passage, Satan is compared to the King of Babylon which would also be judged.
  - The "footstool" is the metaphor for the Temple of God (1 Chronicles 28:2; Psalm 132:7; Isaiah 60:13; Ezekiel 43:7); footstool may represent a tool of God or something in the service of God
  - Often in Scripture, clouds carry God's judgment.
- 2:2 The phrase "swallowed up" is often used to infer death (Lamentations 2:5 has multiple "swallowed up"). Sheol swallows up an individual as the dust of this world encloses a corpse.
- Israel was royal nation (Exodus 19:5-6) that became profane and cast out.
- 2:3 The "horn" represents power, strength and authority. Jerusalem lost their power.
- The right hand represents the power, so when it is drawn back, the power is no longer being used.
- 2:4 Not only did God remove His right hand of protection in the prior verse (Lamentations 2:3), but He also set His hand against His people.
- The use of the word "tent" infers a lack of protection and firmness.
- 2:5 "*The Lord has become like an enemy.*" When God's people sinned, He became as an enemy to them.
- 2:6 God has treated the tabernacle like a lean-to, temporary shelter. God appointed the place, and then He destroyed it.
- God "*has despised king and priest*" which were the generational appointments of Israel's anointed "shepherds."
    - God had established a royal legacy through David's lineage. (2 Samuel 7:12-13; 1 Chronicles 17:10-14)
    - God had established a priestly legacy through Aaron's lineage (Numbers 18:1-2).
- 2:7 "*The Lord has rejected His altar; He has abandoned His sanctuary.*" The judgment of God left no way for His people to continue living in their sin while vainly offering sacrifices. The Gentiles should have never been in such a holy place as the Temple of God, but God gave it over to the conquerors for a pagan celebration.

- 2:8 A “plumb line” acts as a standard that reveals how far off His people had drifted. To “sin” means to deviate from the standard.
- 2:9 The physical record of the Law (scrolls) had been burned and carried away.
- The gates were representative of the social and judicial activity of the community; the gates had been destroyed and buried along with everything associated with them. The bar across the gate was a symbol of protection and security that no longer existed.
  - The entire Jewish society and structure had been constructed according to the Torah (the Law) which was “no more.”
  - The Prophets were the mouthpiece of God, but God went silent because they had rejected His truth (Ezekiel 7:26)
- 2:10 The elders were meant to be the wise and respected class of responsibility, but they sat on the cursed ground and mourned their situation. (Genesis 3:17) Sackcloth was made from the coarse black hair of goats.
- 2:11 The Hebrew term for “spirit” is “bowels” (the center of feelings and emotions). The term for “heart” was the Hebrew word “liver”. The liver is the heaviest organ in the body representing the deepest emotions.
- 2:12 The infants and children were starving to death as they wandered the streets searching and begging for food. The starving children died in their mother’s arms as they asked their mothers for food.
- 2:13 Jeremiah asks what can be said when the sin of the people has brought about such horrific ruin and judgment. The only one who could heal them had passed judgment upon them (Luke 5:31-32, 9:18; Matthew 13:15)
- 2:14 After their destruction, Jerusalem finally recognizes the false teaching and prophecies of those who misled the people. The false prophets did not tell God’s people to repent and turn from their sin.
- The prophets of false and foolish visions did not identify the sin of the people nor call for their repentance. (Ezekiel 13:8-16)
  - The people became enslaved by their sin before becoming enslaved by the Babylonians.
- 2:15 Jerusalem became a testimony of judgment when God’s people rebel. Clapping, hissing and shaking their heads were all forms of astonished mockery.
- Just as Satan was the perfection of beauty (Ezekiel 28:12, 17), so was Jerusalem before it was judged for its sin.
  - God’s people were to bring “joy to the world” (Psalm 98:4, 100:1), but that joy would not come until the nativity of the Messiah (Luke 2:10)
- 2:16 The pagan enemy nations believe that they have brought the judgment of God’s people to fruition.
- 2:17 In the destruction of His people in Jerusalem, the Lord had fulfilled His word (Deuteronomy 28; Leviticus 26:14-39).
- 2:18 The term “*Oh Wall*” is a reference to God as the protector of His people.
- 2:19 The night watches need to go no further than the very beginning as destruction is already upon them. The corpses of the children can be seen as having starved to death on every street.
- **According to Lamentations 2:5, to what had the Lord become?**
    - **An enemy of Jerusalem**

- **According to Lamentations 2:6, what did the Lord do?**
  - **He made Zion forget festival and Sabbath**
- **According to Lamentations 2:8, what did the Lord stretch out?**
  - **A measuring line to judge how far his people had deviated (sin) from His righteousness**
- **According to Lamentations 2:9, what did the Lord remove from Kings and Prophets?**
  - **From the Kings, the Lord took the Law and from the Prophets, the Lord took His visions.**
- **According to Lamentations 2:11, who could be heard suffering in the streets of Jerusalem?**
  - **The infants and babies paid the price as consequences of the sins of their parents**
- **According to Lamentations 2:15, what had Jerusalem been called prior to its fall?**
  - ***“The perfection of beauty; the joy of all the earth.”***
- **According to Lamentations 2:17, what did the Lord achieve?**
  - **He fulfilled His Word and His promise from long before**

**Read Lamentations 2:20-22... Jeremiah Prays About the Consequences of God’s Anger**

2:20 Famine was so great in Jerusalem that cannibalism occurred with women eating their offspring (Lamentations 4:10; Jeremiah 19:9, Deuteronomy 28:54-57; Leviticus 26:29).

- **As the children with their mothers (who cannibalize them), the priests and the prophets are in danger where they should be safe (in the sanctuary).**

2:21 There was no mercy during the slaughter by age (young/old) or gender (female/male).

2:22 During the Jewish appointed feast everyone was called to Jerusalem, and in the same way, terrors were congregated into Jerusalem.

- **According to Lamentations 2:20, how had mothers in Jerusalem fed themselves?**
  - **Cannibalism of their children**
- **According to Lamentations 2:22, to what was the assault of Jerusalem’s enemies compared?**
  - **A festival day where everyone came to Jerusalem**

11 Lamentations 3-5

**Read Lamentations 3:1-18... Jeremiah Grieves His Personal Calamities**

3:1 *“I am the man who has seen affliction.”* Jeremiah has witnessed God’s wrath with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC. The rod could be a symbol of authority for a king, a disciplining tool for a parent or protection for a shepherd over his flock.

- **God utilized Assyria as His rod (Isaiah 10:5), and then God utilized Judah to do the same.**

- 3:2 Jeremiah was called to a weary and grievous ministry where the people were in darkness without understanding of God or His truth. God has removed the lamp of the people.
- 3:3 God's hand turning against someone would result in medical illness. Jeremiah had felt the brunt of the sinful society that surrounded him.
- 3:4 Jeremiah had aged beyond his years (the Targum stated that he seemed an elderly man at the age of 30) while Jeremiah himself was without strength as symbolized by the broken bones).
- 3:5 Just as Babylon laid siege to the city of Jerusalem, Jeremiah says that God laid siege to himself. Jeremiah understands that his trials are directly from the Lord.
- 3:6 This is a reference to sheol which was the grave where men went after death.
- 3:7 God's hedge can be one of protection or capture (Lamentations 3:5). The Assyrians would put individuals in a room and sealed the wall.
- 3:8 God does not listen to the prayers of those who displease Him (Lamentations 3:44; Isaiah 1:15, 59:2; Zechariah 7:13)
- 3:9 "*Hewn stone*" seems to speak of purposeful cutting – often manmade effort; Judah's efforts with idolatry brought Babylonians efforts of onslaught.
- To make a way "crooked" was to deviate from the straight path which was the definition of sin.
- 3:10 Jeremiah feared that God was ready to ambush as a bear or lion.
- 3:11 Continuing the concept of wild animals, Jeremiah feels that God has torn him in pieces. Jeremiah's destruction seems to personify the destruction of Jerusalem.
- 3:12-13 Jeremiah believes that God had "cut him to the quick" as it was impossible for Jeremiah to escape the arrows of the Lord.
- 3:14 Jeremiah was a joke to those bound for destruction. (Lamentations 3:63).
- 3:15 Drunkenness was a sign of out-of-control and not able to reason.
- 3:16 The Babylonians had to make their ovens out of sand, and they would bake bread by pressing dough to the outside of an oven until it was baked, so it would pick up the grit of sand (Psalms 3:7, 58:6)
- The mummies of Egypt have their teeth worn down because they ate something that was gritty over time.
- 3:17 God has removed all concept of peace from Jeremiah (Ezekiel 27:30)
- 3:18 As the strength of the man waned away, so had his hope in the Lord.
- **According to Lamentations 3:1, what does the writer say of himself?**
    - **He is a man who has seen affliction**
  - **According to Lamentations 3:10, to what is God compared?**
    - **A bear and a lion that are waiting to ambush the prey.**
  - **According to Lamentations 3:14, how do the people treat Jeremiah?**
    - **They mock and abuse him**
  - **According to Lamentations 3:18, what has been eliminated?**
    - **Perseverance and patience have been exhausted.**

### **Read Lamentations 3:19-36... Jeremiah Hopes in God's Mercy**

- 3:19 The man pleads with the Lord to reminisce with him over the struggles of his life.
- 3:20 The soul of this man has been tested and tried, so it has been humbled within him.  
The outcomes of the affliction are a broken soul that is bowed and humbled.



- 3:21 When a man is weak, then God will show Himself to be strong (2 Corinthians 12:10).
- 3:22 In spite of the trials of this life, God has allowed Jerusalem and Jeremiah to survive.
- The capital “R” in “LORD” shows that this is the name for the covenant God Yahweh.
  - The term lovingkindness is the unique covenant term “hesed” that emphasizes God’s endless, faithful compassion.
- 3:23 Every morning, His people are reminded of His faithfulness in spite of our unworthiness
- “*Great is Thy Faithfulness*” was a hymn written by by Thomas Chisholm (1866–1960) with music accompaniment composed by William Runyan (1870–1957) in Baldwin City, Kansas
  - “Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed Thy hand hath provided; Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!”
- 3:24 This world has nothing for God’s people, but God Himself is our portion. This originates with the Levitical priesthood not receiving an allocation of land (Numbers 18:20). By this point, everyone in Israel has lost their land portion, so God would be the only portion remaining (Psalm 73:26). When everything on earth is lost, God is the portion for His redeemed (Matthew 6:19).
- Believers don’t seek Him for their worldly benefits because the greatest benefit is a relationship with God’s person.
- 3:25 Hope in the Lord’s salvation and quietly wait on Him. As the believer goes through the trial, it is good that the believer not complain, but instead learn the lessons that the Lord is teaching.
- 3:26 “*It is good that he waits silently for the salvation of the Lord.*”
- 3:27 It is much more difficult for older agnostics and atheists to learn to trust in the Lord. If an individual must lose his possessions to learn that everything in this world is fleeting and temporal, it is better to happen in one’s youth.
- 3:28 Believers are called to encourage one another, but the one going through the trial must also have time to rely on God alone. The one in the trial must be given opportunity to reflect and meditate on God’s lessons without distraction.
- 3:29 The image of putting one’s mouth in the dust is a symbol of submission (Psalm 72:9; Micah 7:17). Hope can only come through humble submission and reliance on God alone.
- 3:30 The “smiter” in this case are the Babylon invaders that God has orchestrated. The persecuted are called to submission in God’s plan (Matthew 5:38-39; Luke 6:29; 2 Samuel 16:11-13).
- 3:31 The Lord was disciplining His people through judgment, and He would restore them after 70 years.
- 3:32 God does indeed cause sadness and trial, but His compassion is to bring His people through it
- 3:33 The Lord desires to bless His children (Matthew 7:11; James 1:17), and not torture His children (Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4). However, God also wants to teach His children as a Father (Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:10-11).
- 3:34 The phrase “*to crush under the feet*” is a Hebrew idiom of submission (1 Corinthians 15:25)

3:35-36 The judicial system was perverted to power and word games for the purpose of wealth instead of justice. The Lord witnessed the decay of the penal system, so He judged righteously.

- **According to Lamentations 3:21, when does Jeremiah have hope?**
  - **When he recalls the travesties of his life and the way that the Lord has sustained him.**
- **According to Lamentations 3:22, what is endless and eternal?**
  - **The love and mercy of the Lord is never ending.**
- **According to Lamentations 3:23, what aspect of God is proclaimed as great?**
  - **God's faithfulness is great.**
- **According to Lamentations 3:24, what is the inheritance of God's people?**
  - **God Himself is the inheritance and hope of His people**
- **According to Lamentations 3:25, to whom is the Lord good?**
  - **To those who wait for Him and seek Him**
- **According to Lamentations 3:26, what is good for man to do?**
  - **Wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord**
- **According to Lamentations 3:28-30, does suffering impact hope?**
  - **Only in that God might see the suffering and save.**
  - **God alone is the salvation of His people**
- **According to Lamentations 3:31-32, who causes grief?**
  - **The Lord causes grief, but only for a time.**

### **Read Lamentations 3:37-54... Jeremiah Acknowledges God's Justice**

3:37 Nothing takes place without the Lord's sovereign power allowing it.

3:38 God is the source of grief and blessing (Isaiah 45:7)

3:39 Sinful man should not complain to God, but instead consider his personal sinful state and actions.

3:40 Instead of complaining, sinful man should repent and return to God.

3:41 In sincere prayer to the Lord, believers lift up their hearts as well as their hands (Joel 2:13). Beyond a physical stance, the believer takes a spiritual stance with their heart before the Lord.

3:42 Israel admits that they sinned against God law and broke their covenant with Him through idolatry. They assumed that God would overlook their sin because they were His chosen people with His presence in the Temple, but God did not forgive their sinful lifestyles.

3:43 The Lord judged His people and pursued them with His wrath.

3:44 The shekinah glory was so holy that it could not be entered (Exodus 14:24; 1 Kings 8:11-13; 2 Chronicles 5:14)

3:45 The term "offscourings" infers garbage or the "sweepings" of dust/trash (1 Corinthians 4:13). God's people have become detestable (like trash or dung) to the world in the same way that they had spiritually become detestable to God.

3:46 The enemies of Israel were ready to consume them.

3:47 God's people no longer lived a joyful orderly life, but instead, they were in a perpetual state of panic and persecution.

3:48-49 Jeremiah was known as the "weeping prophet" because of his grief over the rebellious nation around him.

- 3:50 While Jeremiah utilizes his eyes to cry, He wants the Lord to look down and see his plight. The final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple came with Zedekiah losing his physical eyesight in the same way that he had previously lost his spiritual eyesight.
- 3:51 Instead of seeing the blessings of the Lord, Jeremiah witnessed the judgment of the Lord.
- 3:52 The officials of Zedekiah wanted to silence Jeremiah's prophecies as he simply told the truth about God's message.
- 3:53 Jeremiah was thrown into several dungeons/cisterns (2 Kings 25:1-30: Jeremiah 38:1-40:6).
- 3:54 The phrase "*waters flow over my head*" might symbolize drowning (Matthew 14:29-30), and the phrase "*to be cut off*" means to lose one's life.
- **According to Lamentations 3:37, who ensures the future?**
    - **The Lord commands all events**
  - **According to Lamentations 3:38, what should a living man not do?**
    - **Complain about the judgment and discipline for his sins**
  - **According to Lamentations 3:40, how should a man respond to discipline?**
    - **He should test and examine his ways before repenting and returning to the Lord**
  - **According to Lamentations 3:41, what should be lifted to the God in heaven beyond hands?**
    - **The hearts should also be lifted to the Lord; worship should be internal as well as external**
  - **According to Lamentations 3:44, while in judgment, what cannot reach the Lord?**
    - **The prayers of those being judged.**
  - **According to Lamentations 3:48-50, how is the author emotionally moved by God's judgment?**
    - **The author weeps for the grief of God's people**
  - **According to Lamentations 3:54, what did the author say when overcome by judgment?**
    - ***"I am lost"***

### **Read Lamentations 3:55-63... Jeremiah Prays for Deliverance**

- 3:55 Although Jeremiah was in the darkest of circumstances, he called on the name of the Lord for salvation.
- 3:56 Jeremiah is assured that although the people would not listen to him, the Lord would. He prays that God respond and take action when He hears Jeremiah's prayer.
- 3:57 The Lord comforted Jeremiah and said "*Do not be afraid.*" The phrase "fear not" is often the first word given from the supernatural.
- 3:58 God is the defendant of the soul (Zechariah 3:1-4) and the Lord is the Redeemer (Goel) of the life (Isaiah 48:17).
- 3:59 Jeremiah believes that God has witnessed his plight as he calls on God to judge righteously.
- 3:60 Jeremiah is persuaded that the Lord has seen the schemes of his enemies.
- 3:61 Jeremiah is persuaded that the Lord has heard the reproach from his enemies.

3:62 Jeremiah emphasizes that his enemies gossip and plot against him all day long.

3:63 Jeremiah refers to himself as their “*mocking song*” from when they wake up until they go to sleep.

- Although Lamentations had begun with Jeremiah grieving the plight Judah, their judgment was also an answer to his prayer for God to hold his enemies accountable.
- **According to Lamentations 3:57, what was God’s response when His people called for Him?**
  - **God came near and said “*Do not fear!*”**
- **According to Lamentations 3:60-63, what had the Lord witnessed?**
  - **The mocking and persecution of His people.**

### **Read Lamentations 3:64-66... Jeremiah Prays for Vengeance on His Enemies**

3:64 Jeremiah is persuaded that God will pay his enemies back according to their deeds (Galatians 6:7).

3:65 As the people of Israel and Judah rejected God’s call for repentance their hearts increasingly hardened more and more until they were under God’s curse.

3:66 Jeremiah is convinced that the Lord would aggressively carry out His judgment on those who persecuted Jeremiah.

- **According to Lamentations 3:64, what will determine the Lord’s judgment?**
  - **The wicked actions of the people would determine their judgment**
- **According to Lamentations 3:65, what would be part of the curse on the wicked?**
  - **The Lord would give them dull hearts that were not sensitive to Him or His calling.**

### **Read Lamentations 4:1-12... Zion Grieves Her Prolonged Suffering**

4:1-2 Israel had once considered themselves to be a special treasure to God (Exodus 19:5-6), but now God’s people were downtrodden and unwanted by anyone.

- The gold was no substitute for food in the starving city; a city under siege without food changes the priorities of those needing food because wealth is not edible.
- The Priests ephod consisted of sacred stones representing each tribe of Israel (Exodus 28:12, 39:8-14), and those precious stones had been destroyed and taken to Babylon just as was the case with the tribes that those stones represented.
  - The opening word “how” (’êkāh הֵכָאֵ) is often used in Hebrew to begin laments and chants of grief.
- The people were once weighed in fine gold but they were frail and hollow earthen jars that were easily broken.
- The opening word “how” (’êkāh הֵכָאֵ) is often used in Hebrew to begin laments and chants of grief.

4:3 The wild jackals cared for their offspring, but God’s people did not care for the needs of their young.

- The behavior of ostriches as poor parents relates to mankind (Job 39:13-18); ostriches can step on their eggs before they are hatched and kill their offspring.
- The sins and rebellion of the Israelites ended up with the death of their children as well.

- 4:4 The infant thirsted to death while the children starved.
- 4:5 Those who had been well-to-do were now needy; the wealthy were covered with ashes instead of purple/scarlet clothes.
- 4:6 Jerusalem suffering a slow, painful demise in contrast to Sodom's immediate destruction. The Babylonians made an 18-month siege of Jerusalem.
- 4:7 This verse references those who had original colorings that were vigorous, vital, healthy and clean.
- The "consecrated ones" might reference the Nazarites. Scripture also references a patriarch as a "Nazir" defined as young strong ruler (Genesis 49:26; Deuteronomy 33:16).
  - The allusion of snow and milk is righteousness.
  - The ruddy color (of coral) was a healthy reddish coloring.
  - Lapis lazuli was a stone often utilized in statues for a brown hair and beard, so this infers healthy brown hair (Ezekiel 1:26)
- 4:8 In contrast to the prior verse, the men of Jerusalem had become unrecognizably dark, shriveled and withered.
- 4:9 Those killed quickly with the sword have a preferable death to one who starves to a torturous death over time.
- 4:10 Women who had once been genuinely compassionate had turned to cannibalism of their own children. (Jeremiah 19:9; Lamentations 2:20; Ezekiel 5:10).
- God had given explicit warnings about the end result of sin (Leviticus 26:29; Deuteronomy 28:53-57)
  - The historian Josephus documented that during the Babylonian exile, mothers would hide the corpses of their babies under their beds to be eaten a little at a time, and the men would search the city to bury the corpses because they were bringing disease and plague.
- 4:11 The Lord fulfilled His warnings as sin was punished in horrific ways.
- 4:12 Israel considered themselves untouchable and safe from judgment.
- **According to Lamentations 4:1, what had become common and worthless?**
    - **Gold and holy stones were scattered**
  - **According to Lamentations 4:4, how did the children in Judah die?**
    - **Judah's children died from famine as they starved to death**
  - **According to Lamentations 4:6, to what is the destruction of Jerusalem compared?**
    - **The punishment of Sodom**
  - **According to Lamentations 4:9, why were some who died happier than others?**
    - **Although they all met disaster, some died quickly by the sword while others suffered over a period of time from famine.**
  - **According to Lamentations 4:10, what had kind and compassionate women devolved into?**
    - **Cannibals – women had boiled and eaten their own children during the famine**
  - **According to Lamentations 4:12, what did the Gentile Kings of the world believe?**

- **They thought that no one would be able to assail the fortified city of Jerusalem.**

### **Read Lamentations 4:13-20... Zion Confesses Her Sins**

- 4:13 Destruction of Jerusalem is a result of the fallen spiritual leaders (Jeremiah 6:13, 8:10, 14:14-16, 23:9-46; Lamentations 2:14). Israel's priests and prophets had persecuted the true men of God. Shedding innocent blood pollutes and causes a curse on the surrounding land (Psalm 106:38-39; Ezekiel 22:1-5).
- 4:14 The religious leaders were men without understanding (blind) who were defiled by their persecutions of righteous men.
- 4:15 The religious leaders had become like lepers (representing sin – Leviticus 13:45-46). Religious leaders often enjoy the public acclaim (Matthew 23:7; Mark 12:38; Luke 11:43, 20:46), but these religious leaders were viewed as despicable and unclean.
- The Lord warned His people that if they pursued sin, even the Gentile nations would not have a place for refuge (Deuteronomy 28:65); the Jewish community would be chased from country to country.
- 4:16 God rejected His spiritual leaders just as they had rejected God and His ways. The people turned away from the religious leaders just as they had taught their congregations to turn from God.
- 4:17 Instead of repenting and turning to the Lord, Judah had turned to their alliance with Egypt to save and rescue Jerusalem from Babylon. (Jeremiah 37:3-10)
- 4:18 The Babylonian invaders made it unsafe to even go into public. *“Our end drew near; Our days were finished; For our end had come.”*
- 4:19 While Eagles can travel at 30 miles per hour (mph) using their wings, they travel much faster when diving to attack (“stoop” or “swoop”) their prey”. Bald eagles can dive at up to 100 mph while golden eagles can dive at 150 mph. (Jeremiah 48:40)
- 4:20 God had breathed into man the breath of life, and into His prophets His words as His anointed. Jeremiah had been incarcerated in the pits because he prophesied God's message. God's prophets had trusted in Him for their refuge – the “shadow of His wings” (Psalms 17:8, 36:7, 57:1, 63:7)
- **According to Lamentations 4:13, why was the wrath of God so fierce towards Jerusalem?**
    - **The sins of Jerusalem's prophets and priests (religious leaders) were egregious including the murder of the righteous.**
  - **According to Lamentations 4:14-15, what became part of the judgment of the prophets and the priests?**
    - **They were ostracized as being defiled and unclean**
  - **According to Lamentations 4:16, who scattered the priests and elders?**
    - **The Lord himself judged the exalted of Judah**
  - **According to Lamentations 4:17, for what did God's people watch?**
    - **They uselessly watched a nation that could not save itself**

### **Read Lamentations 4:21-22... Edom is Threatened While Zion is Comforted**

- **Judgment on Edom (The Book of Obadiah; Jeremiah 49:7-22)**

- 4:21 As Edom watched joyfully over the demise of Israel, they are reminded that the cup of God's wrath would come to them. Job also came from the land of Uz (northern Arabia).
- 4:22 Edom would be exposed and punished while God's judgment on Israel expires. God's people would no longer remain as captives in Babylon, but instead He would restore them to the Promised Land.
- **According to Lamentations 4:21, what would pass to God's people?**
    - **The cup of God's wrath**
  - **According to Lamentations 4:22, whose sin had been punished and whose sin was yet to begin?**
    - **Israel's discipline had occurred while judgment on Edom was coming.**

### **Read Lamentations 5:1-22... A Prayer that Itemizes Judgment & Requests Restoration**

- **The 5<sup>th</sup> Chapter is not an Acrostic; instead it is a prayer.**
- 5:1 Jeremiah directs this prayer to the "LORD" ← when this word has a capital "R", the Hebrew term is "Yahweh" for His covenantal name (Exodus 3:14). The name "Yahweh" can be defined as the "ever & only living God."
- Jeremiah asks the covenant God to remember the plight of Israel and to witness what has occurred.
- 5:2 Just as the sinful Amorites had been displaced by Israel because of sin (Genesis 15:13-16), Israel and Judah had been exiled as strangers took over the promised land.
- 5:3 The men of Judah had died in battle leaving orphans and widows. (James 1:27 – Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 10:18, 14:29, 16:11, 14, 24:17, 19-21, 26:12-13, 27:19)
- The terms orphans and widows are used throughout Scripture to represent the neediest.
  - God is also viewed as the husband and father of His people. (Jeremiah 49:11)
- 5:4 The basic resources of the past (water and wood) were now heavily taxed.
- 5:5 Judah was "up to their necks" in a multitude of pursuers; the persecution was ubiquitous. Upon captivity, the victorious King would put his foot on the necks of those who were defeated.
- 5:6 Egypt and Assyria were weak rivals to Babylon (Jeremiah 2:18), but Judah could get food from them whereas Babylon simply exiled the Jewish community.
- In ancient times, the word "submission" meant "shaking someone's hand. Shaking a hand was a sign of submission.
- 5:7 There was a tendency of Judah to blame their forefathers for their sin and circumstances (Jeremiah 31:29-31; Ezekiel 18)
- 5:8 The poorest people were left in the land upon the exile of the upper and middle classes (Jeremiah 39:10)
- 5:9 Those remaining in Judah were without defense and the fields would have been exposed to the marauding Bedouin tribes as well as the surrounding nations of Edom, Moab, and Ammon.
- 5:10 Judah was forced to work the fields as they starved which brought sunburn and weather worn workers who were famished.
- 5:11 The women of the conquered nations were wickedly treated as prize slaves and sexual trophies.

- 5:12 In the Mideast and Far East, shame is very important which is the reason that one should never cause those in the east to “lose face.” There was a practice to disrespect the conquered by undressing them and hanging the corpse from a tree (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). The elders of the community were disrespected which is still true in much of the fallen modern world.
- 5:13 This verse is a reference to child labor. To work at the grinding mill was viewed as women’s work (Judges 16:21), but the young men were utilized to grind the grain. The young men may have also been used to move the grinding stones. The young men were burdened to carry great weights of wood.
- 5:14 The gates were the center of social interaction where weddings and judicial hearings were held. The gates were also the center of entertainment and commerce. For the elders and young men to be removed from the gates was tantamount to stopping all social activity.
- 5:15 There was no joy or dancing in the city where life and hope once thrived. The atmosphere of festivity had been lost.
- 5:16 The Babylon exile removed King Zedekiah in the end, but the Lord Himself had cut off the royal lineage after King Coniah (Jeremiah 22:24, 30). Jerusalem had pride in themselves before their fall into exiled, humbled slaves.
- 5:17 The heart represented the core of the individual while the eyes represented understanding. The fallen people of Judah were numbed and in shock.
- 5:18 The once bustling, populous cities had become desolate, so that the wild animals now inhabited it. The wild animals were sometimes used as references to false gods and demons as well.
- 5:19 In spite of the loss of the human throne in Judah, the LORD would always rule (Hebrews 13:8). The term “LORD” has a capital “R” which equates to the Hebrew term of “Yahweh” for His covenantal name (Exodus 3:14). The name “Yahweh” can be defined as the “ever & only living God.”
- 5:20 Jeremiah asks the LORD, “why?” Jeremiah feels that the LORD has forgotten and forsaken His people for a long time.
- 5:21 Jeremiah pleads that God turn His people back to Him, and restore them so that they can be saved. God even gives repentance as a gift (Jeremiah 31:18-19; Psalms 85:4-7).
- 5:22 Jeremiah states that God may have utterly rejected His people because of God’s exceeding anger towards His people. The crescendo of any judgment beyond material loss and suffering is God’s absolute rejection.
- **According to Lamentations 5:1, what is asked of the Lord?**
    - **To take note of the disgrace and plight of His people.**
  - **According to Lamentations 5:7, how long had Israel’s sins continued?**
    - **From time of the forefathers, generational sin had been passed through the ages**
  - **According to Lamentations 5:16, why had the crown been removed from Judah?**
    - **Because they had sinned**
  - **According to Lamentations 5:21, what did God have the power to do?**
    - **God had the power to restore His people**
  - **According to Lamentations 5:22, how does Lamentations end?**



- In a hopeless question on whether the Lord has altogether rejected His sinful people.

