

Lamentations: Hope for the Broken Hearted

"I have cried until the tears no longer come; my heart is broken. My spirit is poured out in agony as I see the desperate plight of my people. Little children and tiny babies are fainting and dying in the streets." Lam. 2:11 NLT



At some point, we have all had our hearts broken. Life has its disappointments and unexpected hardships. The Prophet Jeremiah had a broken heart. He was called the weeping Prophet (Jer. 9:1; 13:17). For 40 years, he warned Judah about God's judgment for their wickedness, but they ignored him. Finally, God allowed the Babylonians (modern Iraq) to conquer Jerusalem. The Babylonians burned the city, destroyed the temple, and either killed or enslaved the people. Jeremiah saw it coming and was heartbroken when it finally happened (Lament. 2:11 NLT).

The Book of Lamentations is the saddest in the Bible. Yet, it does not leave us there. We learn how to respond to hardship. In the middle of his deep pain and sorrow, Jeremiah found hope (Lament. 3:21-29). Hope is available to us as well. We learn from Lamentations how to respond when our heart is breaking.

Central Lesson: God offers hope for the broken hearted.

Date: Lamentations was written soon after the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in **586 B.C.**

Author: There is evidence that **JEREMIAH** is the author, although the author's identity is not specified.

1. The universal consensus of early Jewish and Christian tradition attributes Lamentations to Jeremiah. In the Septuagint (The Hebrew scriptures translated to Greek in the 3rd century B.C.), there is a note to Lamentations that says: **"And it came to pass, after Israel had been carried away captive, and Jerusalem had become desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem...."**
2. The scenes described in Lamentations were clearly from an eyewitness of Jerusalem's siege and fall by the Babylonians (cf. 1:13-15; 2:6, 9; 4:1-12). Jeremiah was an eyewitness of Jerusalem's fall and remained behind after the captives were deported to Babylon (cf. Jer. 39).
3. There are similarities in style and expression between the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, indicating they were written by Jeremiah.

Jeremiah the prophet was known as the "weeping prophet" (Jer. 9:1; 13:17). He was deeply heartbroken over the spiritual depravity of his nation, Judah, and the impending judgment that God was sending upon Jerusalem. His father, Hilkiah (hīl-kī-āh), was a priest in the temple. Jeremiah was probably to follow in his father's footsteps, but God called him to be a prophet instead (Jer. 1:5, 9-10). He lived in a small town named Anathoth (an-ā-thōth) 2-3 miles north of Jerusalem. God told Jeremiah not to marry (Jer. 16:2) because of the judgment that was coming upon the people of Judah. Jeremiah prophesied for 40 years.

Title: The title of the book comes from the Latin Vulgate (the Bible translated into Latin by Saint Jerome at the end of the 4th century A.D.). The Vulgate title was the Latin word for "Tears" or "Lament." It conveyed the meaning of "loud cries" or "lamentations."

Lamentations is made up of five heartbreaking Hebrew poems of sorrow. Each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet and works towards all 22 letters. The exception to this is Chapters 3 and 5. Chapter three begins every three verses with the same letter and works through the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter five does not start each verse with a letter of the alphabet but follows the same format. Notice that chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5 all have 22 verses. However, chapter 3 has 66 verses (3 times the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet). The meaning of this is that the people of Judah have suffered everything from A to Z.

Key Word: The **TEARS** (1:2; 1:16; 2:11 [weeping in NIV] 2:18; 3:48).

Affliction (1:3, 7, 9; 3:1, 19, 33). **GRIEF** (1:5; 3:32-33, 51). **Mourning** (1:4; 2:5; 5:15).

Key Verse: Lamentations 2:11; Also, Other key verses are: 2:5; 2:17; 3:22-23; 3:32-33.

Key Chapter: The key chapter of Lamentations is **chapter 3**. In the middle of five chapters about destruction, ruin, and hopelessness is the *promise of hope in God*. Especially helpful are verses 21-33.

Outline:

- I. Grief from Sin—Chapter 1
- II. God's Anger Against Sin—Chapter 2
- III. Hope in Suffering—Chapter 3
- IV. Good Old Days and the Bad New Days—Chapter 4
- V. Remember and Restore—Chapter 5

Purpose and Theme: God offers **HOPE** for the broken hearted.

The book of Jeremiah warned of coming judgment; the book of Lamentations looked back at the judgment. The Book of Lamentations is a dirge, a funeral song written about the fall or death of Jerusalem. It is written in the style of an ancient Jewish funeral chant. However, in the middle of sorrow, Jeremiah shows us how to deal with a broken heart.

How to Have Hope When Your Heart Is Broken:

1. Remember the greatness of God's **LOVE & MERCIES** (3:21-22).
"21 Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: 22 The faithful love of the Lord never ends!. His mercies never cease.
2. Rest in God's **FAITHFULNESS** (3:23).
"Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning."
3. Recognize that you **BELONG** to God & place your **HOPE** and **DEPENDANCE** on Him (3:24-26).
"24 I say to myself, 'The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!' 25 The Lord is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him. 26 So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord."

Central Lesson: God offers hope for the broken hearted.

- Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ► Attend a small group.
- Read the Bible. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.