

## **Lamentations: Hope in the Midst of Sorrow**

New Covenant Presbyterian Church

Adult Sunday School 1/30/22

**WSC Q. 25:** How doth Christ execute the office of a priest?

**Answer:** Christ executeth the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.

### **I. Introduction**

A. **Theme:** Lament over the destruction of Jerusalem because of Judah's sin.

1. Lamentations is a collection of five poems that mourns the most tragic day in the history of Judah. -Peter Lee
2. The historical narrative that recounts the fall of Jerusalem is found in 2 Kings 25:1-21, Jer. 39:1-10, and 52:1-34.
3. Lamentations is the description of the physical and spiritual trauma of the fall of Jerusalem

B. **Author:** The author is not stated but there is good evidence that Jeremiah is the author

1. External Evidence: The Greek Septuagint, Latin Vulgate, and Jewish tradition specify Jeremiah as the author
2. Internal Evidence: That the author is an eyewitness of Jerusalem's siege and fall is clear from the graphic nature of the scenes portrayed in the book (1:13-15; 2:6, 9; 4:1-12). Further, there are a number of similarities between the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations (e.g., the phrase "daughter of" occurs about 20 times in each book). In addition, Jeremiah is connected with this type of literature in 2 Chronicles 35:25).
3. There are many scholars who do not think that Jeremiah is the author for various literary reasons
  - a) Some believe there is not enough emphasis on the sin of Judah in Lamentations in order to be Jeremiah
  - b) Others say laments for cities were often written at the time of rebuilding rather than the time of destruction in which case Jeremiah could not be the author
4. Jeremianic authorship is reasonable but not necessary.- Peter Lee

C. **Date:** 586 or 585 B.C. shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem

Jeremiah  
(warning)  
Looking forward



Destruction  
of  
Jerusalem  
586 B.C.



Lamentations  
(Mourning)  
Looking back

**D. Title:**

1. The Hebrew title is translated “how!” It is the first word of 1:1, 2:1, and 4:1
2. Jewish tradition also refers to it as “qinot” meaning Lamentations. This is the title given by Greek Septuagint and Latin Vulgate.

**II. Structure and Outline**

**A. Poetic features**

1. **Imagery** is used to preach the message of this book
  - a) The dominant image is the personification of Jerusalem
    - (1) Jerusalem is personified as an abused and publicly humiliated woman (ch.1-2)
    - (2) Jerusalem is personified as a physically tormented man (ch. 3)
    - (3) Jerusalem is personified as a suffering community (ch. 3)
    - (4) Jerusalem is personified as a righteous sufferer and repentant sinner (ch. 3)

**DQ: Why do you think that Jerusalem is personified in so many different ways? What is helpful about this?**

2. **Acrostic** is the most astounding literary feature in Lamentations- Peter Lee
  - a) Chapter 1 is a perfect acrostic. It starts with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and continues for 22 units to the end of the alphabet
  - b) Chapters 2-4 get more complicated and reverse some of the patterns
  - c) Chapter 3 is the most complex acrostic. It is a trifold acrostic. All three lines in each unit follow the alphabetic pattern (aaa, bbb,ccc)
  - d) Chapter 4 returns to the original acrostic
  - e) Chapter 5 breaks from the acrostic and is the shortest chapter.

**DQ: Why do you think such detailed and structured poetry is used in this book? What is ironic about it?**

*“It is startling to discover that a book that portrays such radical disorientation should be one of the most ordered works in the Old Testament.”- Barry Webb*

### III. Message and Theology

#### A. Suffering

1. Lamentations is called the most dark and depressing book in Scripture
2. Lamentations provides a voice for the suffering.
3. It identifies with male/female, individual/community, righteous sufferer/repentant sinner

**DQ: What is helpful about a book like this when we are suffering? What does it teach us about ourselves and God?**

*“To come across language in which one finds one’s own hurts and grief so precisely and accurately named and expressed can be a wonderfully consoling and forever transformative experience.” -Dobbs-Allsopp*

#### B. The Repentant Sinner/Righteous Sufferer

1. Judah’s sin was the reason for their suffering, but there is also a righteous remnant that suffers along with the whole community
  - a) 3:1-39 attributes suffering to sin
  - b) 3:49-66 suggests suffering “without cause”
2. The man of affliction in ch. 3 seems to suffer as an individual without cause, but as a member of the sinful community he suffers along with them.

**DQ: Who are some righteous sufferers from the OT that you can think of?**

3. Ultimately we are the repentant sinners and Christ is the **true** righteous sufferer

#### C. A Violent God

1. Most people struggle with the description of God in books like Lamentations
2. Throughout the whole book God is the agent causing havoc in the city
  - a) He inflicts terrible pain (1:12)
  - b) He set fire to my bones (1:13)
  - c) He assaults the daughter of Zion with a bent bow (2:4)
  - d) God is even described as like their enemy (2:4-5)
3. We see God’s covenantal justice against sin being carried out

**DQ: What is difficult for people about the character of God in a book like this?**

**DQ: Some believe in a god of only love and not wrath. What do we lose if that’s the case?**

### IV. Christ in Lamentations

- A. Lamentations provides prophetic pictures of Christ
  1. Afflicted of the Lord (1:12)

2. Despised by his enemies (2:15-16)
  3. Laughingstock of all people (3:14)
  4. Smitten and insulted (3:30)
- B. Jeremiah's weeping over the destruction of Jerusalem is a picture of Christ weeping over Jerusalem (Matt. 23.37)

**V. Hope in the Midst of Sorrow**

- A. We look forward to a city that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading (1 Peter 1:4)
- B. There is a coming glorified city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God (Heb. 11:10)
- C. We seek the city that is to come (Heb. 13:14)

*He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore. Rev. 21:4*

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