

# *Lamentations*

## *"Hope in the Midst of Destruction"*

### **Background Information**

"How," which is a Hebrew way of expressing dismay, leads to the title. Lamentations carries the idea of a loud wailing.

This is the only book in the Bible that contains nothing but dirge poems.

Along with Ruth, Esther, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes, Lamentations is included in a Jewish series of books called the Five Scrolls, which are read on special occasions. Lamentations is read to remember the date of Jerusalem's destruction on the 9th day of Ab (around late July/early August).

The book is an acrostic. Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5 are 22 verses, with each verse starting with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 3 does so three times over in its 66 verses.

Unquestionably, though not named in the book, Jeremiah is the author.

### **Time Covered and Outline**

The book is meant to be a dirge of one event: the fall of Jerusalem. No real time passes in the book, since it is a poem, but the book was likely penned during or very soon after that event, which occurred in 583BC.

The five chapters of Lamentations provide a ready-made outline of the book

- I. The First Lament: Jerusalem's Devastation (chapter 1)
- II. The Second Lament: The Lord's Anger Explained (chapter 2)
  - A. The Lord's perspective (1-10)
  - B. The human perspective (11-19)
  - C. Jeremiah's prayer (20-22)
- III. The Third Lament: Jeremiah Expresses His Grief (chapter 3)
  - A. The prophet's distress (1-20)
  - B. The prophet's hope (21-38)
  - C. The prophet's prayer (39-66)
- IV. The Fourth Lament: God's Wrath Detailed (chapter 4)
  - A. For Jerusalem (1-20)
  - B. For Edom (21-11)
- V. The Fifth Lament: A Prayer by the Remnant (chapter 5)
  - A. Lord, remember us (1-18)
  - B. Lord, restore us (19-22)

### **Major Themes**

God's judgment of wickedness; even among His people  
Hope in the midst of suffering

## God's Character in Lamentations

Faithful (3:22-25)

Good (3:25)

Merciful (3:22-23)

Wrathful (throughout the book)

## Jesus in Lamentations

While there are no direct references to the coming of Jesus in the book, the tears that flow from Jeremiah's eyes over the city of Jerusalem point us to the time when Jesus Himself would weep over the city (Matthew 23:37-39). Like Jeremiah wept over this judgment, Jesus is the judge, but does not wish for any to perish. It pains His heart when people do not follow the will of God.

## Key Words in Lamentations

Weeps (Hebrew *bakah*) "wailing." 1:2; 1:16

Renew (Hebrew *chadash*) "to renew" or "to repair." 5:21

## Elsewhere in the World...

About the same time of Jerusalem's fall, Pythagoras, the famed mathematician, was born.

## Elsewhere in Scripture...

The fall of Jerusalem is recorded at the end of 2 Kings and late in 2 Chronicles. Lamentations is a reaction to that event.