

## I. Lamentations

- a. Purpose: In this session we will survey the book of Lamentations by looking at the authorship, purpose, structure and other matters concerning the book.
- b. Authorship
  - i. Reason #1 why it is written by Jeremiah: The Bible attribute this as written by Jeremiah
    1. *“Then Jeremiah chanted a lament for Josiah. And all the male and female singers speak about Josiah in their lamentations to this day. And they made them an ordinance in Israel; behold, they are also written in the Lamentations.”* (2 Chronicles 35:25)
    2. Notice this verse mentioned Jeremiah chanted a lament after the death of King Josiah.
    3. It mentioned that contents of this lament was *“also written in the Lamentations.”*
  - ii. Reason #2 why it is written by Jeremiah: Same unique phrases found also in the book of Jeremiah<sup>1</sup>
    1. *"among her lovers she has none to comfort her"* in Lamentations 1:2 also in Jeremiah 30:14.
    2. *"the wine cup of God's judgment"* in Lamentations 4:21 also in Jeremiah 49:12.
    3. *"the virgin daughter of Judah"* in Lamentations 1:15 also in Jeremiah 14:17.
    4. *"the prophet's eyes flow down with tears"* in Lamentations 1:16a also in Jeremiah 9:1, 9:18b; 13:17b.
    5. *"fears and terrors surround"* in Lamentations 2:22 also in Jeremiah 6:25; 20:10.
    6. Appeal to God for vengeance in in Lamentations 3:64– 66 also in Jeremiah 11:20.
  - iii. Reason #3 why it is written by Jeremiah: Different Bible translations and historical Jews and Church Fathers said it was by Jeremiah
    1. The Greek Septuagint places Lamentations after Jeremiah and includes an opening introduction to the book in the first verse, saying it was written by Jeremiah.<sup>2</sup>
    2. According to Mark Rooker: “Aramaic Targum, the Peshitta, the Vulgate, and the Babylonian Talmud, as well as early church fathers such as Origen and Jerome, all attest that Jeremiah was the author.”<sup>3</sup>
- c. Purpose

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Lamentations” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 19234-19237.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Lamentations” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 19229-19230.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Lamentations” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 19231-19232.

- i. Richard Mayhue: “The mourning of captive Zion as written by Jeremiah.”<sup>4</sup>
  - ii. Barry Webb: “It is a book about suffering, but not suffering in general. It is about deserved suffering, suffering for sin.”<sup>5</sup>
  - iii. According to Andrew Hill: “The book of Lamentations commemorates the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies of Neuchadrezzar. The poems are both a testimony of divine justice and a call to repentance for the people of God.”<sup>6</sup>
  - iv. According to Mark Rooker: “Lamentations records the pathos and pain that took place at the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 586 BC ([2 Kings 24-25](#)).”<sup>7</sup>
  - v. In my own words: This is the emotional mourning and confession of sins towards God on the destruction of Jerusalem in Judea by the Babylonians summarized in [2 Kings 25:1-21](#).
- d. Structure
- i. Richard Mayhue’s outline<sup>8</sup>
    - 1. The Ruin of Jerusalem (1)
    - 2. The Wrath of God (2)
    - 3. The Request for Mercy (3)
    - 4. The Review of the Siege (4)
    - 5. The Request for Restoration (5)
  - ii. Mark Rooker’s outline<sup>9</sup>
    - 1. Jerusalem Is Devastated (1)
    - 2. The Reasons for God's Wrath (2)
    - 3. The City Laments Its Devastation (3)
    - 4. Zion's Ancient Glory and Present Misery (4)
    - 5. Israel Calls for God's Mercy (5)
- e. Closer look at Lamentations
- i. The book is a work of poetry, what in Hebrew is considered a Lament or even a funeral song.
  - ii. It has an interesting overall structure
    - 1. Each of the book’s five chapters are poems containing 22 verses except for [Lamentations 3](#) which has 66 verses.<sup>10</sup>
    - 2. [Lamentations 1-4](#) are acrostic poems using the Hebrew alphabet’s 22 consonants for each verse.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master’s Seminary), 77.

<sup>5</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 79.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Hill, “Lamentations” in *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 543.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Lamentations” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Location 19250.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master’s Seminary), 77.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Lamentations” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 19266-71.

<sup>10</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 60.

<sup>11</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 60.

3. **Lamentations 3** is a triple acrostic poem with the first three lines being the first Hebrew letter, the second three line the second Hebrew letter, etc.<sup>12</sup>
  4. **Lamentations 1** is the only one that follows the normal order of the Hebrew alphabet whereas **chapters 2, 3, and 4** the Hebrew letter *pe* precedes the letter *ayin*.<sup>13</sup>
  5. Reference to the alphabet might be for memory sake but also to convey the idea of completeness.<sup>14</sup>
  6. Also remember grief over death and loss is often without structure and response to the lack of structure but this poem being acrostic gives grief shape and helps with coping.<sup>15</sup>
  7. At the same time this is an exploration of “A to Z” of human sorrow when God disciplines due to human’s sin.<sup>16</sup>
  8. **Lamentations 5** is the only poem in the book that does not follow the acrostic pattern.<sup>17</sup>
  9. Each chapter’s first verse summarizes the poem and tells us what it is about.<sup>18</sup>
- iii. **Lamentations 1**
1. First section (**Lamentations 1:1-11**) is from the perspective of a witness of Jerusalem/Zion.
  2. Second section (**Lamentations 1:12-22**) is from the perspective of a witness of Jerusalem/Zion.
  3. A theme that repeats in this chapter is variation of “*no one to comfort*” in **Lamentations 1:2,7, 9, 16-17, 21**.
  4. This chapter is also clear who brought the punishment is God according to **Lamentations 1:5, 9, 11-12, 14-15, 17-18, 20**.<sup>19</sup>
- iv. **Lamentations 2**
1. **Lamentations 2:1-17** shows it is God who destroyed Jerusalem.<sup>20</sup>
  2. **Lamentations 2:18-19** exhorts crying out to God.<sup>21</sup>
  3. **Lamentations 2:20-22** shows Jerusalem’s cry.<sup>22</sup>
- v. **Lamentations 3**

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<sup>12</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 60.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Lamentations” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 19379-19381.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Lamentations” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 19276-19277.

<sup>15</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 61.

<sup>16</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 61.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Lamentations” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 19282-19283.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Lamentations” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Location 19292.

<sup>19</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 61.

<sup>20</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 61.

<sup>21</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 61.

<sup>22</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 61.

1. In this chapter the chapter is more first person singular in which personal dimension of grief is expressed.<sup>23</sup>
  2. Surprisingly there is mention of hope in this chapter: **Lamentations 3:18, 21, 24, 25** (“wait” has the idea of hoping here), 29.
  3. How did Jeremiah start having hope again? In **Lamentations 3:19-21** we see the focus on remembering
    - a. In **verses 19-20** it is memory of the bad circumstances that might have been involuntary because of events.<sup>24</sup>
    - b. Yet in **verse 21** we see “recall to mind” is a deliberate choice of the sufferer.<sup>25</sup>
    - c. What Jeremiah is intentionally remembering about the Lord is about God: “*The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*” (**Lamentations 3:22-23**)
  4. Jeremiah mourning is not demanding for good things to happen because of some self-righteousness, see **Lamentations 3:39**: “*Why should any living mortal, or any man, Offer complaint in view of his sins?*” → Here Jeremiah is saying he is not Job with his suffering.
  5. This led Jeremiah to exhort the readers: “*Let us examine and probe our ways, And let us return to the Lord.*” (**Lamentations 3:40**)
- vi. **Lamentations 4**
1. **Lamentations 4:1-10** shows Jerusalem’s former splendor in contrast with the present humiliation of her people.<sup>26</sup>
  2. **Lamentations 4:11-20** continue describing the suffering for the people in Jerusalem.
  3. **Lamentations 4:21-22** declares judgment upon Edom.
- vii. **Lamentations 5**
1. As stated earlier this poem is not acrostic.
  2. It also is a prayer to God.<sup>27</sup>
  3. This chapter is first person plural throughout.<sup>28</sup>
    - a. The first person plural here is significant because in a lot of ways this chapter is like **Lamentations 3** but in the first person plural and not first person perspective of Jeremiah.
    - b. That is, some of the people are following Jeremiah’s example of going to God.
  4. There is an acknowledgement of sin in **Lamentations 5:16**.
  5. Like **Lamentations 3:22-23, Lamentations 5:19** is a positive confession of God’s attribute but note what attribute is the focus:

<sup>23</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 66.

<sup>24</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 68.

<sup>25</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 66.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Lamentations” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 19314-19315.

<sup>27</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 74.

<sup>28</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 73.

*“You, O Lord, rule forever; Your throne is from generation to generation;”* this time there is an acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty.

6. Since God is sovereign it led the believers here to first ask God two questions rather than demand upon God in **verse 20**: *“Why do You forget us forever? Why do You forsake us so long?”*
7. Then it is followed by a request in **verse 21** of being restored: *“Restore us to You, O Lord, that we may be restored; Renew our days as of old,”*
8. And the conclusion leaves us hanging: *“Unless You have utterly rejected us And are exceedingly angry with us.”* (**v.22**); Did God utterly rejected them? We of course now know the answer: No.

f. Place of this book in the Canon

i. Lamentations depend upon the previous revelation in Scripture

1. God’s punishment here should not surprise the people in light of God’s covenantal blessings and curses in **Deuteronomy 28** and **Leviticus 26**.
2. **Lamentations 3:21-22** is reflection of the truth in **Exodus 34:6**
  - a. In **Lamentations 3:21-22** a succession of God’s attributes are mentioned:
    - i. *“lovingkindnesses”* (Hebrew: *hesed*)
    - ii. *“compassions”* (Hebrew: *raham*)
    - iii. *“faithfulness”* (Hebrew: *muna*)
  - b. These attributes are from the great covenantal confession **Exodus 34:6**: *“Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate (Hebrew: *raham*) and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness (Hebrew: *hesed*) and truth;”*
  - c. What we can learn here is that we must trust in God’s Word about who God is more than even our present experiences.

ii. Pointing towards Christ

1. There does not seem to be conclusive quotations from the New Testament of the book of Lamentations. Yet I think we can still point towards Christ as application.
2. Recall Jeremiah saying these words: *“I am the man who has seen affliction Because of the rod of His wrath.”* (**Lamentation 3:1**)
3. Who is a man that fully knows God’s affliction and the rod of His wrath? Not Jeremiah, not even Jerusalem and Judah, but Jesus Christ!