

Lamentations: The Consequences of Sin

1. The author of Lamentations is not named, but every indication, along with tradition stretching back to before Christ, is that Jeremiah wrote it.
2. The book is a lament over the city and people of Jerusalem (and Judah as a whole) at the time of their destruction at the hands of Babylon (587/86).
3. The story is quite simple: God promised judgment for sin, the people were unrepentant, God brought judgment; but God also promised to deliver them eventually and destroy their enemies. The author describes and mourns the discipline and looks forward with hope to the deliverance.
4. The book is a series of five laments (each chapter is a separate lament).
5. For historical context, read 2 Kings 25:1-21, 2 Chronicles 36:15-21, and Jeremiah 39:1-10. Also, the brief book of Habakkuk is helpful in understanding Lamentations.
6. The hope expressed in the book is primarily in the middle (third) lament. By placing it in the middle the hope is given priority – displayed prominently.

Outline:

- Lam 1 First Lament: The City's Destruction
 Lam 2 Second Lament: The People's Sin and Suffering
 Lam 3 Third Lament: The Faithfulness of God
 Lam 4 Fourth Lament: Famine and Suffering
 Lam 5 Fifth Lament: Crying Out to God

Historical Setting:

In 588, due to the sin of God's people and their unrepentant hearts, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, laid siege to Jerusalem for about 18 months. During the siege, Egypt, on whom Judah counted for defense, tried to rescue her and was defeated, leaving Judah with no worldly hope. In the midst of starvation, Jerusalem finally succumbed. King Zedekiah fled with his finest soldiers, abandoning the people, but was later captured. The temple and city walls were torn down. All the temple treasures were taken. All the nobles' palaces were burned down. The religious and civil leadership was put to death, and the rest of the people were led away into captivity. After all this the author looked back and lamented the death and destruction.

Where is Christ in Lamentations?

The lament over Jerusalem anticipates Christ's lament of Matthew 23:37. Suffering the wrath of God for sin finds its ultimate expression in the suffering of Jesus Christ, so that the horrors that are described in Lamentations sometimes sound like what Christ suffered. But the sense in which the suffering is described is entirely like that which Christ experienced.

See also NT quotations and allusions...

Key Themes:

1. The wrath of God against sin.
2. The sin of God's people which warranted his wrath.
3. The need to repent and turn to God.
4. The suffering of God's people.
5. The faithfulness of God to deliver after discipline.
6. The faithfulness of God to destroy their enemies.

Some Key Passages:

1. Lamentations 3:22-23
The inspiration for the hymn, Great is Thy Faithfulness by Thomas Chisholm.

LAMENTATIONS

Book Recommendations:

1. *Jeremiah and Lamentations* – RK Harrison (TOTC)
2. *Jeremiah and Lamentations: From Sorrow to Hope* – Philip Graham Ryken (Preaching the Word) A large book, but very accessible.