

LAMENTATIONS: JEREMIAH'S JOURNAL OF WOES

STUDY THREE

Jeremiah's Journal of Woes

Survey of Lamentations

The prophet Jeremiah is writing Lamentations. He's walking through the remains of the city of Jerusalem after it has been taken captive and destroyed. A temple that stood for centuries is now in ruins, burned and in rubble, and Jeremiah is heartsick. He's broken. As he records what he witnesses, he cries out to God for God's strength and God's help. In the middle of it, he finds hope in God's faithfulness.

—Charles R. Swindoll

THOUGH fashioned by God and chosen to reflect heaven's presence on earth, Adam and Eve chose their own path and fell from their divine calling. Destruction and chaos and suffering ensued. The tragic experience of humanity's fall in the garden of Eden finds itself symbolized in the tragic experience of the nation of Israel—the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of God's people.

Jeremiah spoke for God as a prophet of God by warning the nation against forgetting its divine call. The people didn't heed the prophet's words and thus ate the bitter fruit of their actions, which they had sown across centuries. Jeremiah poured out his anguish by writing some of the finest poetry in the Hebrew Bible.

Just as the fall of Israel symbolizes the greater fall of humanity, Jeremiah's elegiac couplets symbolize all our laments as we journey through a world that has lost its way. But Jeremiah's laments don't leave us in darkness. Through them we find the light of hope in the God of hope who enters our pain with us.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

We study the Word because it conveys to us the heart and mind of God. That's why it profits us. It equips us to complete the spiritual endeavors to which God has called us. Take a moment now to seek God's presence and blessing for your time in His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Look over Chuck Swindoll's chart of the book of Lamentations to help you grab hold of the key ideas and get a bird's eye view of the flow of the book. Note what you find surprising or interesting or puzzling. Getting the big idea of a biblical book helps kickstart your study of it. Also, visit insight.org to see Chuck's overview of Lamentations.

LAMENTATIONS

	Jerusalem's Desolation	The Lord's Anger	Jeremiah's Grief	The Lord's Anger	Jeremiah's Prayer
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4	CHAPTER 5
Underlying Emotion	Lonely, groaning	Angry, exhorting	Broken, weeping	Desperate, anguished	Weary, pleading
Short Prayers	1:20-22 "See us!"	2:20-22 "Look at us!"	3:55-66 "Judge them!"	4:20 "Avenge us!"	5:21 "Restore us!"
Theme	Mourning over sin; the severity of God's judgment; hope in His mercy				
Key Verses	1:1, 5	2:14, 17	3:16-24	4:11-12	5:5, 19-22
Christ in Lamentations	Jesus, like Jeremiah, wept over the sins of Jerusalem (Matthew 23:27-38; Luke 13:34-35).				




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Throughout this series, be sure to note the varying perspectives from which the speaker writes. Below, we will examine three brief passages using the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method.¹



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A City Now Deserted Lamentations 1:1-4	
Jeremiah opens his letter with a panorama of Jerusalem's devastation to help the reader take in the full scope of the tragedy.	
 Observation	 Interpretation
Observe <i>Lamentations 1:1-4</i> . What are the key ideas and main subjects?	Record one timeless truth about God or God's ways from this passage.
 Application: Living the Truth	
<p>We apply biblical truth to our lives by appropriately responding to it. Sometimes, the Bible informs; other times, it inspires. Sometimes, it warns; other times, it directs. That means we obey its directives, heed its warnings, trust its promises, and embrace its truths.</p> <p>With that in mind, translate the timeless truth you recorded into an appropriate response. Record why it's important and how you can incorporate this truth into your life.</p>	

Father, amid unsafe days, You remain all-powerful and able to protect. In uncertain times, You remain all-knowing, leading us aright. In the unprecedented difficulties, You remain absolutely sovereign. Remind us that our times are in Your hands. —Chuck Swindoll



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His Mercies Never Cease Lamentations 3:19–25	
Amid his tears, Jeremiah recalls the faithfulness of God and commits himself to the good hand of his Father.	
 Observation	 Interpretation
Observe <i>Lamentations 3:19–25</i> . Summarize its message below.	Record one or two timeless truths from this passage.
 Application: Reflecting the Character of God	
Translate one of those timeless truths into an appropriate response by which you can express your love to Jesus or your neighbor. Why did you choose that response?.	

Father, our dependence on You is total, not partial. Our need for Your forgiveness is constant, not occasional. Our gratitude for Your grace is profound, not casual. Our love for You is deep, not superficial or shallow. Equip us with genuine humility and heartfelt compassion. O Lord, we're not alone though we often feel aloneness. We are Yours. Your Spirit lives in us. —Chuck Swindoll



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Joy Has Left Our Hearts Lamentations 5:15-19	
<p>Here, Jeremiah gives one final expression to the pain he, along with the whole community, feels. Notice how they turned to God. In Lamentations, Jeremiah exemplified the vital practice of preaching God's Word to oneself.</p>	
 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>Observe <i>Lamentations 5:15-19</i>. What emphases do you see in this passage?</p>	<p>Note a couple of the timeless truths in the passage that prove especially instructive.</p>
 Application: Receiving Divine Influence	
<p>Just as you did with the previous two passages, convert one of the timeless truths above into an obedient response. Reflect. Tailor that response to your current circumstances just as you tailor it to the truth of God.</p>	

Thank You, Father, for Your great care over us. We don't deserve what You do for us, but we accept it. It's called grace. Thank You for meeting our needs when we have often not given to Your work. You've been faithful to give even when we haven't. Indeed, Your mercies are new every morning. In Christ's majestic name, amen. —Chuck Swindoll

ENDNOTE

- To learn about Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

