

Introduction to LAMENTATIONS

Discuss while waiting to begin

Imagine a situation of very great sin. (Maybe it is your sin. Or the sins of a whole church or nation).

- Typically, how might we respond?
- Can you think of good and less good responses?
- What might we say? or pray? or do?

The background to Lamentations is very important...

Good news:

Exodus... Promised land... Monarchy...

Bad News:

Kingdom splits... "Israel" destroyed by Assyria (722BC)... Babylonian exile (587BC)

What happened? – read 2 Kings 24:18:25:21 (and 2 Chronicles 36:1-21)

Who wrote Lamentations?

God the Holy Spirit

2 Timothy 3:16, "all scripture is God-breathed"

Romans 15:4, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

... maybe through the prophet Jeremiah

What IS Lamentations? The titles of the book...

"Lamentations"

From 1:1 of the Greek Old Testament (the "LXX")

"How"

From 1:1 of the Hebrew Old Testament

→ ** Biblical lament = telling the Lord that everything is not OK **

→ Lamentations = sin and deserved judgement... and the injustice and the suffering that this caused...

Read some extracts...

1:1-3, 1:8, 1:12-13, 1:18, 1:20

2:1-9 ("he..."), 2:14, 2:17, 2:20

3:1, 3:22-24, 3:31-33, 3:40

5:20-22

➔ **The theme of Lamentations**

The dark and suffocating pain of God's people... caused by God's wrath... and by the people's guilt

A highly structured outpouring of grief

The books big themes - see Gavin's outline ➔

5 chapters: like a sandwich (chiasm):

- ➔ The middle & final layers are important
- ➔ The middle of the middle = 3:31-33

An "A-Z" of grief: chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 are "acrostic" in structure

➔ A considered... and "full" sense of grief...

Chapter 1

V1-6 – friendlessness

V7-11 – material loss

V12-17 – unable to escape God's anger at sin

V18-22 – confession and grief

Chapter 2

V1-5 – this is God's doing

V6-10 – physical destruction of Jerusalem

V11-17 – expression of absolute anguish

V18-22 – the need to pray, no matter how difficult

Chapter 3

V1-16 – personal experience of deep suffering

V17-24 – glimmers of hope in God's character

V25-39 – promises for the future

V40-51 – persevering in throwing ourselves on the Lord's mercy

V52-66 – (praying for justice)

Chapter 4

V1-6 – the cheapening of human life

V7-11 – driven to desperation

V12-16 – the destructive sin of spiritual leaders

V17-22 – the long wait for justice

Chapter 5

V1-7 – Turning to God and confessing

V8-16 – oppression and confession

V17-22 – cries for help to the eternal King

Connections between Lamentations and the rest of the Bible help us to understand and apply this part of God's Word...

1. Scripture reveals the Lord to be a "holy" God... and only place of hope
2. He is faithful to His covenant: blessings and curses – Deuteronomy 28 (especially vv49-53)
3. The Lord judges whole nations, whole churches – e.g. Romans 1:18-32, Revelation 1:13, 2:5
4. Not all suffering is judgement: Innocent people and believers suffer too – e.g. Job
5. Believers are to express grief & complaint – e.g. Psalm 79 (Colossians 3:16), Revelation 6:10
6. Necessity of repentance – e.g. 2 Corinthians 7:10
7. The Cross of Christ (Lamentations 2:15 ➔ Mark 15:29): Jesus bore sin and wrath