

# Outline of Lamentations

## A Study of God's Longsuffering, Fierce Anger, and Providential Care for His People

### Introduction:

The current state of Judah and Jerusalem was desolation at the hands of the Chaldeans. Lamentations is composed of five poems of deep sorrow that expressed the current state of the city and the captives. Jeremiah is the apparent author. The prophet's voice is, for the most part of Lamentations, a representation of the people as a whole that were left in Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem. There were no darker times in the history of God's people at this point than these, and so they lamented the awful consequences of their actions.

### God's longsuffering

There comes a time in the life of sinful man that the Lord's longsuffering and patience ends (Lam. 1:5). Jehovah God will show no mercy or pity upon the disobedient at that time (Lam. 2:21). A day of "*fierce anger and wrath*" awaits the one who rejects Jehovah's law (cf. Lam. 2:1-6) and no sinner shall escape (Lam. 2:22). Judah had reached such a state of corruption, and therefore "*the Lord hath trodden as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah*" (Lam. 1:15). Young, old, male, female, adult, and child were all subject to the sword, famine, and pestilence. Jeremiah had warned the people for 42 years, yet to no avail (cf. Jer. 1:1; 25:3ff; 40:1ff).

### God's fierce anger

Children were dying of thirst and starvation (Lam. 4:4); nobles that once ate as kings walked in the streets with their skin barely clinging to the bones in a state of starvation (Lam. 4:7-8); many had been slain with the sword (Lam. 4:9); mothers boiled and ate their own children to avert starvation (Lam. 4:10); Judah's virgins were raped (Lam. 5:11), their princes executed and hung up by the hands for public display (Lam. 5:13); and they were ruled by the Chaldeans, living as servants (Lam. 5:1ff). As Jeremiah watched God's fierce anger unleashed upon sinful Judah, it caused him deep sorrow and pain (Lam. 2:11; 3:48-49).

### God's providence

Jeremiah had assured Judah that what they were about to experience (i.e., sword, famine, pestilence, and 70 years captivity) would serve to move them to shame and repentance (cf. Jer. 29:8-14). The book of Lamentations illustrates that the remnant of Judah was now sorry for their sinful deeds as a consequence of God's divine wrath. They understood, at the point of Jeremiah writing Lamentations, that their yoke of affliction lay heavily upon their neck because of their sins (Lam. 1:14). Judah proclaimed, "*Jehovah is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment*;" (Lam. 1:18). At Lamentations 1:20 Judah proclaimed, "*for I have grievously rebelled*." And again, "*We have transgressed and have rebelled; thou hast not pardoned*" (3:42). Finally, Judah proclaimed, "*Woe unto us! For we have sinned*" (5:16).

Note that the consequences of Judah's sin had not changed even though their hearts were now turning back to Jehovah God (Prov. 13:15; Hos. 2:6). Judah continued to experience great sorrow of heart over the loss of loved ones, the tabernacle, and the city. Judah's sorrow was heavy and tears were flowing as a river that raged out of control (Lam. 1:16; 2:18). A heartbroken people had learned their lesson, but not without the Loving Father driving them to this point with drastic measures. This proves that Jehovah God is a God of love, because in the state of mind Judah was in, they would not have changed without some sort of providential care (please read Jer. 5:30; 6:16 for the state of Judah's mind before God's wrath was pored out upon them).

### God's purpose accomplished

Jeremiah recorded, "*Jehovah hath done that which he purposed*" (Lam. 2:17), "*Jehovah hath accomplished his wrath, he hath poured out his fierce anger...*" (Lam. 4:11) and again stated, "*The punishment of thine*

*iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity*" (Lam. 4:22). As stated above, the people suffered God's wrath for their decision to follow and practice iniquity. There is, however, a special emphasis placed upon the false prophets and shepherds of Judah who bore a heavy burden of guilt for Judah's demise. Jeremiah said, "*It is because of the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her*" (Lam. 4:13). These shepherds had comforted Judah in their sin (Jer. 23:13-17) and therefore held a degree of individual responsibility for Judah's fall.

God's desire for Judah was that they would acknowledge their sins (Jer. 3:13, 25; 13:16). He desired that they seek truth (Jer. 5:1) that they stand in, hear, and obey the laws of God (Jer. 6:16; 7:21-24; 13:10, 17; 26:13), that they amend their ways (Jer. 18:11; 26:13), and that they repent of their sins (Jer. 18:8; 25:5). This was Jehovah's purpose and it was achieved in the remnant that remained in Judah.

## **Practical application**

The Lord works the same way today with His disobedient people. Many of God's people today are currently on a crash course for hell. God's will is that no one perishes in their sins (II Pet. 3:9). Here is where His providence comes in. God's knowledge of the future is His motivation for His present foresight and action. He knows what He wants to achieve, and He provides the means for it to be accomplished. God desires for man to be saved and therefore chastens the disobedient as He did during the days of Judah's rebellion (cf. Rev. 3:19). There comes a time, however, when God's mercy and longsuffering ends. Judah experienced the wrath of Jehovah God for their iniquities (Lam. 1:5). Likewise, those who would exhaust the longsuffering of the Lord today will face His fierce wrath (cf. Rev. 14:19-20). God's people today ought to consider the "*latter end*" of their sins (Deut. 32:29; Isa. 47:7; Lam. 1:9).

Jehovah's "*purpose*" (Lam. 2:17; 4:11, 22) was to move Judah to such sorrow that they would exclaim, 'I have sinned' (cf. Jer. 3:13, 25). The book of Lamentations indicates that Jehovah's purpose had been served (cf. Lam. 1:18, 20; 3:42; 5:16). No man or woman could complain about their sufferings because all were well warned (Lam. 3:39). Let us all be moved with Godly sorrow and repentance of our iniquities before it is everlastingly too late!

## **Chapter 1**

### **I. Jerusalem the widow of shame (1:1-11):**

- A.** "*How doth the city sit solitayr, that was full of people! She is become as a widow, that was great among the nations! She that was a princess among the provinces is become tributary! She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they are become her enemies. Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude; She dwelleth among the nations, she findeth no rest: All her persecutors overtook her within the straits*" (1:1-3).
1. Jerusalem (Zion) was once considered a world power under the reigns of David and Solomon. She was known as a "*princess among the provinces*" but now as "*tributary*."
  2. Those nations that Judah had used as allies are referred to as "lovers." Nations such as Egypt, in whom Judah put her trust rather than God, were not around to comfort her in her time of sorrow (cf. Jer. 2:36ff). Those who would be recognized as her "*friends*" had "*dealt treacherously with her*." The Edomites (Ps. 137:7), Ammonites, Tyrians (Ezek. 25:3-6), and the Moabites (Jer. 40:14) all rejoiced over the fall of Judah.
  3. The captivity of Judah was filled with affliction and servitude.
- B.** "*The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn assembly; All her gates are desolate, her priests do sigh: Her virgins are afflicted, and she herself is in bitterness. Her adversaries are become the head, her enemies prosper; For Jehovah hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: Her young children are gone into captivity before the adversary. And from the daughter of Zion all her majesty is departed: Her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, And they are gone without strength before the pursuer. Jerusalem remembereth in*

*the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that were from the days of old: When her people fell into the hand of the adversary, and none did help her, The adversaries saw her, they did mock at her desolations. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is become as an unclean thing; All that honored her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: Yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward. Her filthiness was in her skirts; she remembered not her latter end; Therefore is she come down wonderfully; she hath no comforter: Behold, O Jehovah, my affliction; for the enemy hath magnified himself” (1:4-9).*

1. As Jerusalem, depicted as an individual, pondered upon her glorious days of worship and activities at the gates of the city, she mourned even more. She now lay in affliction due to the sins she shamelessly committed against Jehovah God.
2. Jerusalem is depicted as an “*unclean*” woman that was to be shunned (cf. Lev. 12:2-5). Her enemies had seen her nakedness, and she was now ashamed. Jerusalem sinned and did not think about the “*latter end*.” This verse depicts a sinner who was caught up in the pleasure of the moment and disregarded the consequences of his or her sinful actions (cf. Deut. 32:29; Isa. 47:7).

C. *“The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: For she hath seen that the nations are entered into her sanctuary, Concerning whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thine assembly. All her people sigh, they seek bread; They have given their pleasant things for food to refresh the soul: See, O Jehovah, and behold; for I am become abject” (1:10-11).*

1. Jerusalem was plundered. Treasures were taken from the city because they had sinned. Jeremiah had warned that this would be the case (cf. Jer. 20:5).
2. Aside from suffering the shame of being plundered, the people starved to death in the famine. Jeremiah had warned the people of this, too, as a consequence of their disobedience (Jer. 14:11-12; 21:7; 24:10; etc...).

## II. Sorrows of captive Zion (1:12-22):

A. *“Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is brought upon me, Wherewith Jehovah hath afflicted [me] in the day of his fierce anger. From on high hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevailed against them; He hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: He hath made me desolate and faint all the day. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand; They are knit together, they are come up upon my neck; He hath made my strength to fail: The Lord hath delivered me into their hands, against whom I am not able to stand” (1:12-14).*

1. Jerusalem called out for sympathy to those who passed by and hissed at the sight of her shame.
2. Jerusalem wore the yoke of affliction as a consequence of her sins tightly upon her neck.
3. These verses are indicative that Judah recognized that her suffering was of her own sinful doing.

B. *“The Lord hath set at nought all my mighty men in the midst of me; He hath called a solemn assembly against me to crush my young men: The Lord hath trodden as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah. For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water; Because the comforter that should refresh my soul is far from me: My children are desolate, because the enemy hath prevailed” (1:15-16).*

1. God’s wrath against the ungodly is often depicted in the scriptures as a winepress that mashed the grapes under foot as the blood of the grapes flow (cf. Rev. 14:19-20).
2. The one in whom Judah ought to have had comfort, God, was far from them. The punishment and solitude of life without Jehovah God drove the prophet to exclaim, “*I weep; mine eye, mine eye runs down with water*.” Tears of deep anguish and sorrow describe the state of Judah. Though Jeremiah was writing this, it is apparent that this is the cry of Judah’s people. They recognized their sins and the consequences thereof and therefore cried. This was precisely the state of mind Jehovah had determined to drive the people due to their sins (cf. Jer. 30:11; 31:17-20; 46:28).

C. *“Zion spreadeth forth her hands; there is none to comfort her; Jehovah hath commanded concerning Jacob, that they that are round about him should be his adversaries: Jerusalem is among them as an unclean thing. Jehovah is righteous; for I have rebelled against his*

*commandment: Hear, I pray you, all ye peoples, and behold my sorrow: My virgins and my young men are gone into captivity. I called for my lovers, [but] they deceived me: My priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, While they sought them food to refresh their souls” (1:17-19).*

1. The Lord had driven Judah to repentance in the most grueling circumstances. The prophet had foretold of the grievous deaths (Jer. 16:3-4), the taking of their riches (Jer. 20:5), the removal of all happiness (Jer. 25:10), that their cities would be left desolate and uninhabited (Jer. 34:22), and that they would spend seventy years in captivity for their sinful deeds (Jer. 25:11). All had come to pass, and the people of Judah knew assuredly that Jehovah had brought them through these terrible days because of their sin.
  2. There was none to come to their aid. All had been destroyed by the Chaldeans.
- D. *“Behold, O Jehovah; for I am in distress; my heart is troubled; My heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: Abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death. They have heard that I sigh; there is none to comfort me; all mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done it: Thou wilt bring the day that thou hast proclaimed, and they shall be like unto me. Let all their wickedness come before thee; And do unto them, as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions: For my sighs are many, and my heart is faint” (1:20-22).*
1. The distress and trouble of heart because of the current affliction was recognized as being the result of Judah’s *“grievous rebellion”* against Jehovah’s commandments.
  2. Again, the enemies of Judah were seen as rejoicing over her fall. Judah saw their happiness and prayed to Jehovah. Her prayer revealed their acknowledgment of sin. Jeremiah had spoken for God saying, *“Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against Jehovah thy God...”* (Jer. 3:13), yet they said, *“We will not walk therein...”* (Jer. 6:16).
  3. Now that Jehovah had chastened them with a battle axe of Babylon (cf. Jer. 51:20), they had humbled themselves. Their pride had turned into shame and depression due to their sins (cf. Jer. 6:16; 26:10-11).

## Chapter 2

### I. Jehovah had poured out His anger and wrath upon a disobedient people (2:1-22):

- A. *“How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger! He hath cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, And hath not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger. The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: He hath thrown down in his wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; He hath brought them down to the ground; he hath profaned the kingdom and the princes thereof. He hath cut off in fierce anger all the horn of Israel; He hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy: And he hath burned up Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about. He hath bent his bow like an enemy, he hath stood with his right hand as an adversary, And hath slain all that were pleasant to the eye: In the tent of the daughter of Zion he hath poured out his wrath like fire” (2:1-4).*
1. Jeremiah had proclaimed to the rebellious nation of Judah that Jehovah God would fight against them as their enemy for their sinful deeds (Jer. 21:5).
  2. Note the repeated use of the terms *“wrath”* and *“fierce anger.”* Tracing back the reason for these actions and emotions we find the source being Judah’s sin. God is made angry and filled with wrath against those who continue in their sins!
- B. *“The Lord is become as an enemy, he hath swallowed up Israel; He hath swallowed up all her palaces, he hath destroyed his strongholds; And he hath multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden; he hath destroyed his place of assembly: Jehovah hath caused solemn assembly and sabbath to be forgotten in Zion, And hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest. The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary; He hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces: They have made a noise in the house of Jehovah, as in the day of a solemn assembly” (2:5-7).*

1. The words “*wrath*” and “*anger*” are used six times in the first six verses.
  2. The people of Judah continued to worship Jehovah even though Jeremiah had revealed its fruitlessness. Judah considered her worship acceptable (Jer. 11:15; 14:11-12; 26:2) while the Lord saw it as unacceptable (Jer. 6:20). To further illustrate the polluted nature and the Lord’s rejection of their worship, Jeremiah stated that Jehovah had violently taken away the tabernacle, destroyed the place of assembly, cast off His altar, abhorred his sanctuary, and despised both king and priest.
- C. *“Jehovah hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion; He hath stretched out the line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying; And he hath made the rampart and wall to lament; they languish together. Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: Her king and her princes are among the nations where the law is not; Yea, her prophets find no vision from Jehovah. The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, they keep silence; They have cast up dust upon their heads; They have girded themselves with sackcloth: The virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground”* (2:8-10).
1. Not only was the place of worship destroyed with the king and priest, but the cities walls were torn down. No walls meant no gates and no closures to the city for protection.
  2. Such a state found (destruction of place of worship, city, and walls along with no king, priest, or prophet that speaks from God) its remaining citizens (elders and virgins of Jerusalem) sitting on the ground in deep depression.
- D. *“Mine eyes do fail with tears, my heart is troubled; My liver is poured upon the earth, because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, Because the young children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city. They say to their mothers, Where is grain and wine? When they swoon as the wounded in the streets of the city, When their soul is poured out into their mothers' bosom. What shall I testify unto thee? what shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? For thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?”* (2:11-13).
1. As Jeremiah beheld the crying babies and young children swooning through the streets in weakness and misery, his heart was broken. Overcome with emotions the prophet broke out in tears that he could not stop. His pain was as deep as the liver within his body.
  2. Though the prophet would that the situation was better, he realized that the wound of sin was deep and was incurable at this point (cf. Jer. 8:22; 46:11). It is because of verses such as these that Jeremiah has often been referred to as the weeping prophet.
- E. *“Thy prophets have seen for thee false and foolish visions; And they have not uncovered thine iniquity, to bring back thy captivity, But have seen for thee false oracles and causes of banishment”* (2:14).
1. Jeremiah had previously exposed the false prophets and their false doctrines, yet the people would not hear (cf. Jeremiah chapter 23).
  2. Interestingly, we see here what the duty of the prophet was. They should have “*uncovered iniquity*” rather than cover it up. Rather than comforting sinners in their error (cf. Jer. 23:13-17), they should have exposed their sins and called for their repentance! God’s people today are to expose rather than tolerate (cf. Eph. 5:11)!
- F. *“All that pass by clap their hands at thee; They hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, [saying], Is this the city that men called The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth? All thine enemies have opened their mouth wide against thee; They hiss and gnash the teeth; they say, We have swallowed her up; Certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it”* (2:15-16).
1. Jeremiah had foretold that the passers-by would do this very thing; i.e., hiss and so forth to exercise scorn over the fallen city and nation (cf. Jer. 19:8).
  2. Their jealousy over the years against Jerusalem was now vindicated in their minds.
- G. *“Jehovah hath done that which he purposed; He hath fulfilled his word that he commanded in the days of old; He hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: And he hath caused the enemy to rejoice over thee; He hath exalted the horn of thine adversaries. Their heart cried unto the Lord: O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night; Give thyself no respite; let*

*not the apple of thine eye cease. Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; Pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord: Lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger at the head of every street” (2:17-19).*

1. From the “*days of old*” Jehovah had “*purposed*” the destruction of his people, city, and tabernacle because of Judah’s rebellious and sinful ways.
  2. Jeremiah had warned the people with tears (Jer. 14:17-18). The prophet called upon Judah to lift up her voice and hands to the Lord and to repent of her sinfulness.
  3. The sore famine that claimed the lives of their children ought to have motivated Judah to give in to their rebellious and stubborn ways.
- H.** *“See, O Jehovah, and behold to whom thou hast done thus! Shall the women eat their fruit, the children that are dandled in the hands? Shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord? The youth and the old man lie on the ground in the streets; My virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword: Thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger; Thou hast slaughtered, [and] not pitied. Thou hast called, as in the day of a solemn assembly, my terrors on every side; And there was none that escaped or remained in the day of Jehovah’s anger: Those that I have dandled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed” (2:20-22).*
1. A gruesome and terrible picture is painted regarding the ongoing suffering within the city walls as Babylon put on the siege. Women age their children; prophet and priest were murdered in the sanctuary of the Lord; young and old were dying of famine and disease; and virgins and young men of war were dying by the sword. The fierce anger of Jehovah God had wiped them clean and had not pitied the people in their plight.
  2. Such a scene strikes terror into the reader. The loving and merciful Jehovah God had now turned His face from His people. He had sent them prophet after prophet to cause them to repent and turn yet Judah rejected and even killed them. The time of Jehovah’s visitation of wrath had now come, and there was none to escape.
  3. These words illustrate that God was the Lord of justice (cf. Jer. 9:23). Those who reject His divine standards will face the same wrath and indignation at the coming of Jesus (cf. II Thess. 1:6ff). The word of God is replete with warnings against those who would not obey the Lord’s commandments (cf. Isa. 11:4; 63:1ff; Rev. 6:14-17; 14:9-10, 19-20).

### Chapter 3

- I. Lamentation over grievous sufferings on the part of the surviving people of Judah (3:1-18):**
- A.** *“I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me and caused me to walk in darkness, and not in light. Surely against me he turneth his hand again and again all the day. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones. He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail. He hath made me to dwell in dark places, as those that have been long dead. He hath walled me about, that I cannot go forth; he hath made my chain heavy. Yea, when I cry, and call for help, he shutteth out my prayer” (3:1-8).*
1. Let us first examine the “*I*” that suffered so much at the hand of Jehovah God. Apparently, the “*I*” equates to the “*we*” and “*us*” of verses 40-47. The identity of the author of this third poem is clearly the godly who had remained alive and witnessed all the gruesome wrath of Jehovah upon His people.
  2. Judah had suffered the “*rod of his wrath.*” The Lord is depicted as using His divine rod of correction in other parts of scripture as well as here. Job spoke of God’s rod of anger as did Isaiah (Job 21:9; Isa. 10:5). The Babylonians were used as God’s rod of chastisement against His people for their wickedness (Jer. 25:8-9; 51:20).
  3. Judah walked in the darkness of gloom; there was no good news to give them cheer. They were besieged, starving, diseased, and dying by the sword. Jehovah smote them with His hand continuously (again and again). Such punishment gave way to ruin of the fleshly bodies of many.

4. The city of Jerusalem was besieged and there was no escape. Many had died and could not return to the land of the living. Judah was confined in the siege and could only await her destruction. Such a state of being was compared to having a heavy chain to bear about. To make matters all the worse, those who prayed to Jehovah for relief knew that He had shut His ear to them and would not hear (cf. Jer. 7:16).

B. *“He hath walled up my ways with hewn stone; he hath made my paths crooked. He is unto me as a bear lying in wait, as a lion in secret places. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces; he hath made me desolate. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He hath caused the shafts of his quiver to enter into my reins. I am become a derision to all my people, and their song all the day. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath sated me with wormwood. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones; he hath covered me with ashes. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace; I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength is perished, and mine expectation from Jehovah. Remember mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall”* (3:9-18).

1. The mind of Judah saw her circumstances as an impossible situation to escape or be delivered from. Each route of escape they took, a bear or lion awaited to shred them to pieces. Desolation, sorrow, and death had overcome Judah. The arrows of sorrow and despair had pierced Judah through. So wounded were they that they that others mocked them for their great distress.

2. Jehovah had given them stones to eat in the place of bread, and they had ground their teeth down yet received no sustenance. So long had Judah been in a state of mashing by the hand of God that they knew not what prosperity was like. Judah was so wearied by the mashing of God that they were without strength and without hope of being saved from their punishment.

## II. **Through deep despair there was a ray of hope (3:19-39):**

A. *“My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is bowed down within me. This I recall to my mind; therefore have I hope. [It is of] Jehovah's lovingkindnesses that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness. Jehovah is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. Jehovah is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him”* (3:19-25).

1. After the description of the state of mind Judah was in (i.e., deep sorrow, pain, and bitterness), the surviving people proclaimed that there was hope in Jehovah God because He was the God of lovingkindness (cf. Jer. 9:23).

2. God is a God of love and compassion (cf. Ps. 89:2; 107:43; Isa. 63:7). It is this primary thought that gave Judah a ray of hope, otherwise all would be consumed.

3. Due to Israel having hope, the author proclaimed, *“great is thy faithfulness”* (cf. Ps. 36:6).

4. The idea of waiting on Jehovah is firmly established in Isaiah as a primary theme of the book (cf. Isa. 40:31). Those who seek out the Lord will not be disappointed in His promises!

B. *“It is good that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of Jehovah. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and keep silence, because he hath laid it upon him. Let him put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. Let him give his cheek to him that smiteth him; let him be filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off for ever. For though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses”* (3:26-32).

1. These verses deal with how man handles himself during God's chastening. Let man bear the yoke of suffering patiently and silently (that is, without complaining and murmuring against God).

2. Secondly, the sufferer is to *“put his mouth in the dust.”* This indicates the frame of mind of the one suffering. The mouth in the dust cannot speak against his ill fortune. He is, therefore, commanded to bear his burden with dignity recognizing that Jehovah is molding his mental frame.

3. Thirdly, the sufferer is to endure the abuse of men due to his suffering. God will not allow the suffering to continue without end. Jehovah is not a God that gains pleasure in chastising His beloved children but One who sees the necessity thereof (cf. Jer. 32:41). Interestingly, the

apostle Paul and Barnabas taught that *“through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God”* while in Galatia (Acts 14:22). Paul’s attitude toward said afflictions was that no matter how difficult, they cannot be compared to the glories of heaven that exist for those who wait upon the Lord with patience (cf. II Cor. 4:16-18).

- C. *“For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. To crush under foot all the prisoners of the earth, To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High, To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? Out of the mouth of the Most High cometh there not evil and good? Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?”* (3:33-39).
1. Jehovah God in His sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipresence knows all things and without Him nothing occurs. Man’s sufferings thereby emanate from the Lord as is indicated in Job 1-2.
  2. This being the case, no man has the right of complaint when undergoing suffering for the sins he has committed. Herein is the reason for Judah’s intense suffering... it was for their sin!

### III. **Judah recognized her sins and in great sorrow wept (3:40-66):**

- A. *“Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to Jehovah. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled; thou hast not pardoned. Thou hast covered with anger and pursued us; thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied. Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, so that no prayer can pass through. Thou hast made us an off-scouring and refuse in the midst of the peoples. All our enemies have opened their mouth wide against us. Fear and the pit are come upon us, devastation and destruction”* (3:40-47).
1. After searching and trying their conduct of days past, they were moved to lift up their hands towards the heavens and pray with a heart of humility for help from Jehovah God. Verse 42 begins the earnest prayer with confession of their sins and acknowledgement of the reason behind their affliction.
  2. Jehovah had pursued the people of Judah and had killed them with the sword, pestilence, and famine (cf. Jer. 29:18). A time of zero hope of help from Jehovah God was proved by the Lord having a barrier around Him as a cloud to block out all prayers of His people (cf. Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11-12).
- B. *“Mine eye runneth down with streams of water, for the destruction of the daughter of my people. Mine eye poureth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission, Till Jehovah look down, and behold from heaven. Mine eye affecteth my soul, because of all the daughters of my city. They have chased me sore like a bird, they that are mine enemies without cause. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and have cast a stone upon me. Waters flowed over my head; I said, I am cut off. I called upon thy name, O Jehovah, out of the lowest dungeon. Thou heardest my voice; hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee; thou saidst, Fear not”* (3:48-57).
1. Apparently the author of the book of Lamentation, i.e., Jeremiah, now addressed his own emotional state. First, Jeremiah’s pain was over the wicked state of the women in Judah. The virgin daughters were afflicted (1:4) and gone into captivity (1:18), mothers had eaten their children in intense hunger (2:20), and both mother and virgin daughter lay dead in the streets having been killed by sword (2:21). Such sights and knowledge caused Jeremiah to be emotionally spent with deep sorrow.
  2. The more we consider the prayer mentioned above wherein Jehovah heard, the more we must conclude that those praying were the afflicted of Jehovah God even though He said He would not hear (cf. 3:44). Apparently, this prayer pointed to the future for those who patiently *“wait”* upon Jehovah’s promise and deliverance. This interpretation fits best into the context of the remaining portion of this chapter.
- C. *“O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life. O Jehovah, thou hast seen my wrong; judge thou my cause. Thou hast seen all their vengeance and all their devices against me. Thou hast heard their reproach, O Jehovah, and all their devices against me, The lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day. Behold thou their sitting down, and their rising up; I am their song. Thou wilt render unto them a recompense, O Jehovah,*

*according to the work of their hands. Thou wilt give them hardness of heart, thy curse unto them. Thou wilt pursue them in anger, and destroy them from under the heavens of Jehovah” (3:58-66).*

1. Again the prophet spoke for the people in this prayer, and the thoughts of Lamentations 1:22 come to light. The enemies of Jehovah had committed gross sin and therefore the prayer was that they, too, be punished.
2. The more Jehovah would punish them the harder their hearts would come to be (as with Pharaoh of Egypt). What would and should be a blessing to God’s enemies (i.e., His chastening hand) becomes to them a curse because rather than being moved to repentance and acknowledgement of Jehovah God as the one true God they are hardened all the more.

## Chapter 4

### I. **Judgments against the ungodly inhabitants of Judah (4:1-11):**

A. *“How is the gold become dim! [how] is the most pure gold changed! The stones of the sanctuary are poured out at the head of every street. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, How are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! Even the jackals draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: The daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: The young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: They that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills. For the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom, That was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands were laid upon her” (4:1-6).*

1. A people once viewed as gold for value in the eyes of God were now considered worthless earthen vessels.
2. Mothers did not take care of their children, and so they were compared to the ostrich that lay its eggs and left them to hatch and fend for themselves.
3. Judah’s sins were greater than that of Sodom’s, and so her punishment is greater. Sodom was destroyed mercifully by Jehovah God in a “*moment*” whereas Judah suffered day in and day out with famine, pestilence, and sword. Judah’s children were filled with thirst and hunger until death set in.

B. *“Her nobles were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk; They were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was as of sapphire. Their visage is blacker than a coal; They are not known in the streets: Their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick. They that are slain with the sword are better than they that are slain with hunger; For these pine away, stricken through, for want of the fruits of the field. The hands of the pitiful women have boiled their own children; They were their food in the destruction of the daughter of my people. Jehovah hath accomplished his wrath, he hath poured out his fierce anger; And he hath kindled a fire in Zion, which hath devoured the foundations thereof” (4:7-11).*

1. The health of Judah was gone. They were withered away in hunger, and their skin clung tightly to their bones for want of food.
2. Mothers took their own children and boiled them in pots for food.
3. Such acts indicate that God’s wrath has been poured out upon the people for their gross sin.

### II. **Judgment against the prophet and priest of Judah (4:12-20):**

A. *“The kings of the earth believed not, neither all the inhabitants of the world, That the adversary and the enemy would enter into the gates of Jerusalem. It is because of the sins of her prophets, [and] the iniquities of her priests, That have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her. They wander as blind men in the streets, they are polluted with blood, So that men cannot touch their garments. Depart ye, they cried unto them, Unclean! depart, depart, touch not! When they fled away and wandered, men said among the nations, They shall no more sojourn [here]. The anger of Jehovah hath scattered them; He will no more regard them: They respected not the persons of the priests, they favored not the elders” (4:12-16).*

1. The prophet and priest should have guided Judah in the paths of righteousness; however, they perverted the word of God (Jer. 23:36) and murdered just men who desired Jehovah's standards (cf. Jer. 26:7ff).
  2. All of Judah's affliction of death by sword, pestilence, and famine had occurred due to the corrupt work of the prophet and priest. Now they were fully exposed! The cry in the street when a prophet or priest was seen was, "out of the way! Here comes one who is unclean" (cf. Lev. 13:45).
- B.** *"Our eyes do yet fail [in looking] for our vain help: In our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save. They hunt our steps, so that we cannot go in our streets: Our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come. Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles of the heavens: They chased us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of Jehovah, was taken in their pits; Of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the nations"* (4:17-20).
1. Both before the destruction of Jerusalem and after, God's people sought after help in the wrong place. Egypt was sought after in Jeremiah 37:7 and apparently another nation was looked to now.
  2. Some placed their hope in Zedekiah, Jehovah's anointed king; however, when Zedekiah was captured, all hope must have disappeared before their eyes. The people and shepherds held on to the bitter end in their rebellion.

### **III. Israel's hope lay in the future Messiah (4:21-22):**

- A.** *"Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz: The cup shall pass through unto thee also; thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked"* (4:21).
1. Edom is used as a representative of all Jehovah's enemies as indicated by Isaiah 34:8ff and Jeremiah 49:7.
  2. They better enjoy their temporary peace because the Lord would certainly visit them and make them drink the cup of His wrath.
- B.** *"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; He will no more carry thee away into captivity: He will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will uncover thy sins"* (4:22).
1. Jehovah had completed what He set out to accomplish; i.e., the destruction of Judah for her iniquity that she refused to repent of.
  2. Edom (all Jehovah's enemies) would be the next to be exposed.

## **Chapter 5**

### **I. The current distress under Babylonian captivity (5:1-):**

- A.** *"Remember, O Jehovah, what is come upon us: Behold, and see our reproach. Our inheritance is turned unto strangers, Our houses unto aliens. We are orphans and fatherless; Our mothers are as widows. We have drunken our water for money; Our wood is sold unto us. Our pursuers are upon our necks: We are weary, and have no rest. We have given the hand to the Egyptians, And to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread"* (5:1-6).
1. The inhabitants of Judah that had been left after the Babylonian siege prayed unto Jehovah. They asked Jehovah to look to them and behold their condition.
  2. Judah was deprived of property, protection, and they had to buy their water and food from their conquering foes. Judah was continuously pressed into hard labor now that she had been defeated.
- B.** *"Our fathers sinned, and are not; And we have borne their iniquities. Servants rule over us: There is none to deliver us out of their hand. We get our bread at the peril of our lives, Because of the sword of the wilderness. Our skin is black like an oven, Because of the burning heat of famine. They ravished the women in Zion, The virgins in the cities of Judah. Princes were hanged up by their hand: The faces of elders were not honored. The young men bare the mill; And the children stumbled under the wood. The elders have ceased from the gate, The young men*

*from their music. The joy of our heart is ceased; Our dance is turned into mourning. The crown is fallen from our head: Woe unto us! for we have sinned*" (5:7-16).

1. Judah was not being punished solely for their father's sins, but for her sins, too (cf. 5:16). While it was true that the Lord proclaimed His wrath to be poured out due to the sins of Manasseh (cf. II Kings 23:26), it was equally true that Judah paid the penalty for their own gross sins (please read Jer. 16:11).
  2. Further plight of Judah is given. First, they complained that servants (i.e. the Chaldeans) ruled over them as opposed to self government and freedom. Secondly, they had to risk their lives to gain food from the wilderness. Thirdly, they were blackened by hunger for want of food. Fourthly, Judah's virgins were raped and the princes of the nation strung up by the hands in death for the public eye to see.
  3. Under such circumstances there is no laughter, humor, joy, nor happiness. Finally, the people of Judah proclaimed, "*woe unto us! For we have sinned.*" Surely the purpose of divine wrath had been accomplished in the hearts of God's people (cf. Lam. 4:22). The Lord only desired that Judah acknowledge her iniquity, yet for years she refused. Now, after all that Jeremiah had prophesied had come to pass, the people were left without excuse and in shame and humility proclaimed, "*we have sinned.*"
- C. "*For this our heart is faint; For these things our eyes are dim; For the mountain of Zion, which is desolate: The foxes walk upon it. Thou, O Jehovah, abidest for ever; Thy throne is from generation to generation. Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, [And] forsake us so long time? Turn thou us unto thee, O Jehovah, and we shall be turned; Renew our days as of old. But thou hast utterly rejected us; Thou art very wroth against us*" (5:17-22).
1. Interestingly it is noted by those of Judah that the earthly habitation of Jehovah (Zion) had been destroyed, yet Jehovah and His throne abide for ever.
  2. A final plea of restoration based upon their turning from their sinful deeds is given. At present, Jehovah had rejected His people in His anger at their sins.