

St. John's Baptist Church  
38-40 Everett Street  
Woburn, MA 01801  
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Facilitator: Sister Taryn Johnson

## **LAMENTATIONS**

Background verses: Jeremiah 1: 1-19, Jeremiah 52;  
Key chapters: Lamentations 1– 5

### **Survey of the book**

#### **Lamentations, Book of**

Called in the Hebrew canon 'Ekah, meaning "How," being the formula for the commencement of a song of wailing. The name rendered "Lamentations" now in common use, to denote the character of the book, in which the prophet mourns over the desolations brought on the city and the holy land by Chaldeans. As to its authorship, there is no room for hesitancy in ascribing it to Jeremiah. The spirit, tone, language, and subject-matter are in accord with the testimony of tradition in assigning it to him.

According to tradition, he retired after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to a cavern outside the Damascus gate, where he wrote this book. Jeremiah preached and warned his people of this destruction for 40 years.

#### **Summary of Lamentations:**

The book consists of five separate poems.

Chapter 1: the prophet dwells on the manifold miseries oppressed by which the city sits as a solitary widow weeping sorely.

Chapter 2: these miseries are described in connection with the national sins that had caused them.

Chapter 3: speaks of hope for the people of God. The chastisement would only be for their good; a better day would dawn for them.

Chapter 4: laments the ruin and desolation that had come upon the city and temple, but traces it only to the people's sins.

Chapter 5: is a prayer that Israel's reproach may be taken away in the repentance and recovery of the people.

### **Structure of Lamentations:**

The first four poems (chapters) are acrostics, like some of the Psalms (25, 34, 37, and 119), i.e., each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet taken in order. The first, second, and fourth chapters each have twenty-two verses, the number of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The third has sixty-six verses, in which each three successive verses begin with the same letter. The fifth chapter is not acrostic. It is a prayer.

Speaking of the "Wailing-place of the Jews" at Jerusalem, a portion of the old wall of the temple of Solomon: "There the Jews assemble every Friday afternoon to bewail the downfall of the holy city, kissing the stone wall and watering it with their tears." They repeat from their well-worn Hebrew Bibles and prayer-books the Lamentations of Jeremiah and suitable Psalms.<sup>1</sup>

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

1. Has there ever been a time you can remember in your life, when you were warned not to do something but you choose not to heed the warning? Was there a consequence as a result of your choice? Yes/No Do you now feel that it was justified?
2. Let's look at Jeremiah for a moment. The prophet warned the nation for 40 years that their sins would bring judgment; yet the nation would not listen. He served God by being obedient, and doing God's will. But the nation was not spared. How do you think **you** would feel towards God after seeing total destruction of **your home** and **nation** after being warned it would happen? Do you feel that this could happen in America today?
3. As a Christian, we know that one day, this world will be judged by God. Or do we? Are you/I doing our part to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Perhaps you

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/dictionaries/dict\\_meaning.php?source=1&wid=T0002235](http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/dictionaries/dict_meaning.php?source=1&wid=T0002235)  
Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary

are doing so great! Perhaps not- is this a struggle for you? Do you have a sense of urgency to be a part of the Great Commission?

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