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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Lamentations 4.

(2014)

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But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Lamentations 4.

Topics.

- The holy stones lie scattered at the head of every street of Jerusalem.
- Jackals nurse their young, but the LORD'S people have become cruel.
- The chastisement of God's people is greater than the punishment of Sodom.
- Happier are victims of the sword than victims of hunger, who waste away.
- Compassionate mothers boil their own children for food.
- The prophets and priests in Jerusalem shed the blood of the righteous.
- O Daughter of Edom, the LORD'S will punish; he will uncover your sins.

INTRODUCTION: the book of Lamentations is made up of five poems, each an expression of grief over the fall of Jerusalem. Like a eulogy at a funeral, these laments are intended to mourn a loss—in this case, the loss of a nation. The latter half of chapter three implies that the purpose behind Lamentations' graphic depictions of sorrow and suffering was to produce hope in the God whose compassion is "new every morning" (v23) and whose faithfulness is great even to a people who have been condemned for their own unfaithfulness. Lamentations was probably written shortly after Jerusalem's fall to Babylon in 586 B.C. The author, while not identified in the book itself, may be the prophet Jeremiah, who was said to have "uttered a lament for Josiah" (2 Chron. 35:25).

Lamentations is primarily the woes of the Southern Kingdom of Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) after the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, but prior to this event the Northern Kingdom of Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) had also been taken into captivity to Assyria. Therefore Lamentations sometimes includes the collective cry of both Judah and Israel because at this time of it being written both Judah and Israel were in sorrow and scattered throughout the nations

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

The Holy Stones Lie Scattered at the Head of every Street of Jerusalem.

Lament. 4:1-2 ----- ¹How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold is changed! The holy stones lie scattered at the head of every street. ²The precious sons of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold, how they are regarded as earthen pots, the work of a potter's hands!

The precious sons of Zion: refers to the priests, rulers and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. When Babylon invaded Jerusalem they took all the treasures and sacred items of God's Holy Temple back to the city of Babylon. No doubt much of what was sacred and holy to the Jews, but of no value to the king of Babylon was left scattered in the streets of Jerusalem amongst the slaughtered bodies of the priests and rulers and the inhabitants of the city.

Jackals nurse their Young, but the LORD'S people have become Cruel.

Lament. 4:3-5 ----- ³Even jackals offer the breast; they nurse their young, but the daughter of my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. ⁴The tongue of the nursing infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children beg for food, but no one gives to them. ⁵Those who once feasted on delicacies perish in the streets; those who were brought up in purple embrace ash heaps.

How amazing is this, the LORD is saying that the nurture of a wild jackal is far more caring than that of a mother of Israel and that the rulers of Israel are like an ostrich that bury its head in the sand, meaning they deny reality and refuse to face the consequences of their wicked and corrupt behaviour.

Those who were once extremely rich and wealthy are dying in the streets for lack of food, worse still God's people have become so cruel because of a lack of food that even though their children are crying to be fed no-one gives them even a crumb to eat.

The Chastisement of God's people is Greater than the Punishment of Sodom.

Lament. 4:6 ----- ⁶For the chastisement of the daughter of my people has been greater than the punishment of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, and no hands were wrung for her.

The punishment of Sodom was less than the punishment of Judah, because a quick death is easier to cope with than death that slowly decays and lingers over many months or years. In contrast to Sodom's destruction which was sudden and quick Israel and Judah's was a process of wars, captivity and bondage and suffering over many years.

Happier are Victims of the Sword than Victims of Hunger, who Waste Away.

Lament. 4:7-9 ----- ⁷Her (Judah's) princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk; their bodies were more ruddy than coral, the beauty of their form was like sapphire. ⁸Now their face is blacker than soot; they are not recognized in the streets; their skin has shriveled on their bones; it has become as dry as wood. ⁹Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger, who wasted away, pierced by lack of the fruits of the field.

Judah's princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk; their beauty like sapphire is a reflection back in history to the golden years of the Kingdom of Israel when the kings and the priests did what was right before the LORD. Whereas now they have become spiritually blind, deaf and corrupt so much so the writer refers to them as being blacker than soot. Those who died by the sword in battle were more blessed than those who die by hunger, because those who lack food waste away very slowly.

Compassionate Mothers Boil their Own Children for Food.

Lament. 4:10-12 ----- ¹⁰The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food during the destruction of the daughter of my people. ¹¹The LORD gave full vent to his wrath; he poured out his anger, and kindled a fire in Zion that consumed its foundations. ¹²The kings of the earth did not believe, nor any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was such a fortified city and so cleverly positioned on Mount Zion that no nation or king believed an army would be able to penetrate its walls and enter the city. To overcome this Babylon's armies surrounded the city for about two years so that no one could go in or go out of the city. In ancient times this was one of the methods an army would use to conquer a city. They would destroy the farms, crops, fruit trees, the seeds and lay waste all kinds of food so that their enemies would be weakened, die of hunger or surrender their lives and their city.

The Prophets and Priests in Jerusalem shed the Blood of the Righteous.

Lament. 4:13-15 ----- ¹³This was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in the midst of her the blood of the righteous. ¹⁴They wandered, blind, through the streets; they were so defiled with blood that no one was able to touch their garments. ¹⁵"Away! Unclean!" people cried at them. "Away! Away! Do not touch!" So they became fugitives and wanderers; people said among the nations, "They shall stay with us no longer."

All of this has come upon Judah because of the religious leaders, the prophets and the priests they were so wicked they killed the godly and those that did right if it advanced their own power and wealth. Blind, sick and extremely wounded people

of Judah were left to wander the streets, because the religious leaders were so wicked and bound up in their legalism that they taught their followers not to help or even touch the sick, blind or wounded because they would be made unclean so the sick even though faithful to the LORD, became fugitives amongst foreign nations.

The LORD has Scattered the Priests and Prophets.

Lament. 4:16-18 ----- ¹⁶The LORD himself has scattered them (the priest and the prophets); he will regard them no more; no honor was shown to the priests, no favor to the elders. ¹⁷Our eyes failed, ever watching vainly for help; in our watching we watched for a nation which could not save. ¹⁸They (Judah's enemies) dogged (hunt in KJV) our steps so that we could not walk in our streets; our end drew near; our days were numbered, for our end had come.

God's blessing and hand of protection is totally removed from the city of Jerusalem and the priest and the prophets have fled into the city to hide from the invading armies, but when an army conquers a nation it leaves soldiers in the streets to hunt out its enemies and control the people, this is the condition Jerusalem is in.

Israel Enemies chased them on Mountains and Lay in Wait in the Wilderness.

Lament. 4:19-20 ----- ¹⁹Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles in the heavens; they chased us on the mountains; they lay in wait for us in the wilderness. ²⁰The breath of our nostrils, the LORD'S anointed, was captured in their pits, of whom we said, "Under his shadow we shall live among the nations."

The words, "Under his shadow we shall live among the nation's," means while in Jerusalem the Jews were able to openly keep their faith, their religious ceremonial rites and sacrifices, whereas when scattered among the nations they are unable to do any of these things, nevertheless their faith in God remains deep seated in their hearts, it is in this sense that they live in the shadow of God.

O Daughter of Edom, the LORD will Punish; He will Uncover your Sins.

Lament. 4:21-22 ----- ²¹Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, you who dwell in the land of Uz; but to you also the cup shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare. ²²The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is accomplished; he will keep you in exile no longer; but your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will punish; he will uncover your sins.

Edom is told to rejoice because they aligned themselves with Babylon who has utterly destroyed Jerusalem, but the writer warns Edom that the LORD is about to punish them for their iniquity which He does because they not only aided Babylon in taking the inhabitants of Jerusalem captive they also mocked and scorned them when the armies of Babylon were taking the people out of the city in chains to be held captive in Babylon.

End.