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## Lamentations 3.

(2014)

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## Lamentations 3.

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### Topics.

- The LORD has driven and brought me into darkness without any light.
- The LORD is a lion in hiding who tore me to pieces.
- The LORD bent his bow and set me as a target for his arrow.
- I have become the laughingstock of people, my endurance has perished.
- The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercy never ends.
- The LORD will not cast off forever, but will have compassion.
- The LORD does not willingly afflict or cause grief.
- Is it not from the LORD that good and bad comes?
- God has wrapped himself with a cloud so no prayer can pass through.
- The LORD has made Israel scum and garbage among the people.

**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.

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### The LORD has Driven and Brought me into Darkness without any Light.

Lament. 3:1-7 ----- <sup>1</sup>I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his (the LORD'S) wrath; <sup>2</sup>he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light; <sup>3</sup>surely against me he turns his hand again and again the whole day long. <sup>4</sup>He has made my flesh and my skin waste away; he has broken my bones; <sup>5</sup>he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation; <sup>6</sup>he has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago. <sup>7</sup>He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has made my chains heavy.

As the writer looks out over the city of Jerusalem he is in great despair and sorrow at the destruction and affliction the LORD has brought upon His people. In this chapter he is expressing the collective; heart, spirit and voice of Jerusalem and by extension the people of Judah and the inhabitants of the city.

### **The LORD is a Lion in hiding who Tore me to Pieces.**

Lament. 3:8-11 ----- <sup>8</sup>though I call and cry for help, he (the LORD) shuts out my prayer; <sup>9</sup>he has blocked my ways with blocks of stones; he has made my paths crooked. <sup>10</sup>He is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion in hiding; <sup>11</sup>he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces; he has made me desolate.

The LORD is pictured as a lion and a bear in hiding that turns from their path and has torn Israel and Judah to pieces and made them desolate. The bear is a symbol of Assyria who invaded the Northern Kingdom (the ten tribes) in the land of Samaria and took Israel captive, while the lion is a symbol of Babylon who besieged Jerusalem and took the Southern Kingdom (the two tribes) of Judah into captivity for seventy years.

### **The LORD bent his Bow and Set Me as a Target for His Arrow.**

Lament. 3:12-13 ----- <sup>12</sup>he (the LORD) bent his bow and set me as a target for his arrow. <sup>13</sup>He drove into my kidneys the arrows of his quiver.

The LORD is pictured as a mighty warrior aiming his bow at the writer and firing his arrows into his kidneys. Remember the writer is expressing the collective heart, spirit and voice of Jerusalem and by extension the inhabitants of the city and people of Israel. The heart felt emotions the writer feels is the heart felt emotions of all God's people. (Assyria and Babylon were the arrows God used in his bow).

### **I have become the Laughingstock of People, My endurance has Perished.**

Lament. 3:14-19 ----- <sup>14</sup>I have become the laughingstock of all peoples, the object of their taunts all day long. <sup>15</sup>He has filled me with bitterness; he has sated me with wormwood. <sup>16</sup>He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; <sup>17</sup>my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; <sup>18</sup>so I say, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD." <sup>19</sup>Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! <sup>20</sup>My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me.

The writer, the city of Jerusalem and by extension all God's people are in deep depression, all the surrounding nations are mocking and laughing at them. They are suffering deep hunger, they have no joy, no happiness, no strength, no hope and no-one comes to their aid. The words "remember my wanderings," refers to the forty years Israel wandered in the wilderness prior to entering the Promised Land.

### **The Steadfast Love of the LORD never ceases; his Mercy never Ends.**

Lament. 3:21-26 ----- <sup>21</sup>But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: <sup>22</sup>The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup>they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. <sup>24</sup>"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." <sup>25</sup>The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. <sup>26</sup>It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

How amazing is the spirit and faith of this writer, amongst all this destruction, extreme sorrow and affliction his hope is in the LORD, he knows Judah and Israel brought God's judgment on themselves, because they did not listen to the LORD'S prophets and continued in their rebellion and corrupt ways. The following is a list of sins that permeated the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem throughout their generations. They eventually became like a contagious virus running rampant throughout the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.

They defiled God's Holy name and their own land by their lifestyle, deeds and actions. They committed gross idolatry and Baal altars were set up throughout their land. They worshipped the goddess of love and fertility (her worship was sexually indecent). Worse than this they worshipped Moloch and sacrificed their sons to him in the Hinnom valley. They worshipped a golden calf at a religious centre at Dan and at a religious centre at Bethel. Altars were set up in the temple court for

planetary worship and the worship of the host of heaven (i.e., the sun, moon and stars) and worship of idols and altars had been built under shady trees on their hills throughout their land. Added to this innocent people were killed and cheated out of justice, leaders oppressed others for their own selfish gain and drunkenness, violence, robbery and gross sensuality was rampant. The rich cheated the innocent out of justice, and showed no sense of responsibility towards the poor and instead of relieving their economic distress they devised new means of depriving them of their property. Is it any wonder the LORD compares Israel's ways to the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity? (Ezek. 36:17) and poured out His wrath upon Judah, Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

**The lesson for today:** by wicked behaviour Israel defiled the name of God which resulted in the surrounding nations mocking and despising God. This shines a light on the following truth: the behaviour of everyone who confesses the name of God and Christ His Son will determine to some extent whether outsiders are drawn to God or to despise Him. We are not witnesses to the Lord only when we are sharing our faith with another person our entire life is a witness to our faith and of God it can be a good witness or a bad witness.

**The LORD will not cast off Forever, but will have Compassion.**

Lament. 3:27-32 ----- <sup>27</sup>It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. <sup>28</sup>Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him; <sup>29</sup>let him put his mouth in the dust—there may yet be hope; <sup>30</sup>let him give his cheek to the one who strikes, and let him be filled with insults. <sup>31</sup>For the Lord will not cast off forever, <sup>32</sup>but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

**It is good to bear the yoke in his youth:** refers to accepting the punishment for things one has done wrong in the past and not complaining about it. The writer is saying that the punishment the LORD has inflicted on Judah and Israel is due to them because of their corrupt and wicked ways, therefore it is good for Judah and Israel to accept their punishment and not complain.

**Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes:** means a person is to accept the judgment due to them for the wrong they have done, they are not to try and use clever lawyers or a bribe to escape the punishment deserving to them for the wrong they have done. The application of this to the people of Judah and Israel is that it is a good thing before the LORD if they accept His judgment and not hold Him guilty or accountable for administering the justice due to them for their corrupt and wicked behaviour especially since he sent them prophets to warn them to turn from their wicked ways and they did not heed God's word.

**The LORD does not willingly Afflict or cause Grief.**

Lament. 3:33-36 ----- <sup>33</sup>for he (the LORD) does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. <sup>34</sup>To crush underfoot all the prisoners of the earth, <sup>35</sup>to deny a man justice in the presence of the Most High, <sup>36</sup>to subvert a man in his lawsuit, the Lord does not approve.

One of the great pillars of the LORD'S throne is justice, meaning doing what is right and fair to all peoples regardless of the colour of their skin or whether they are rich or poor. Prior to the invasion of Assyria on Israel and Babylon on Judah, the religious leaders of Judah and Israel, the priests, those in authority, the nobles and the rich and wealthy were perverting justice for their own selfish gain. They were also oppressing the poor by using them for cheap labour so they could be more powerful and make even greater riches and wealth. These things the LORD does not approve of and will bring judgment upon those who do them as he has done to Judah and Israel.

**Is it not from the LORD that Good and Bad comes.**

Lament. 3:37-41 ----- <sup>37</sup>Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the LORD has commanded it? <sup>38</sup>Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come? <sup>39</sup>Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins? <sup>40</sup>Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD! <sup>41</sup>Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven.

It is foolish for those that are alive to complain about their punishment when they know they have done wrong, rather they should examine themselves and return to the LORD.

**NOTICE:** good and bad come from the LORD. The faithful of the Old Testament did not see God as a kind of Santa Claus God who only ever brought about good in their lives. Their faith soared far beyond their circumstances good or bad and far beyond their emotions, joyful or depressed. Their faith was not connected to their feelings or their outward circumstance, God was God regardless of whatever was happening around them good or bad.

**Today in some circles of Christianity:** God is proclaimed as a God who only brings success, riches, wealth and good. The trouble with this kind of faith is that it means that God is only in control of the good things and not the troubles and sorrow we go through. If a person's faith is limited to a God who is only involved in the blessings how are they going to find God and His comfort in times of trouble, grief and sorrow?

### **God has wrapped Himself with a Cloud so no Prayer can Pass Through.**

Lament. 3:42-44 ----- <sup>42</sup>"We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven. <sup>43</sup>"You have wrapped yourself with anger and pursued us, killing without pity; <sup>44</sup>you have wrapped yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through.

Israel knows they have sin against the LORD, they understand that they have brought God's wrath on themselves. It reminds me of a time when my daughter was about four or five years old.

I asked her to do something very simple, but she definitely refused, I, like God did to Israel through the prophets, told her I will only tell her two more times and then she will get a smack if she does not do it. (God gave Judah and Israel many more warning than that). Like the people of God she remained defiant and continued in her wrong-doing, so I lead her by her hand into her bedroom to give her a gentle smack (not a beating), but we had forgotten to take the smacking spoon with us, so she in her very childish and innocent way said, "Daddy do you want me to go and get the smacking spoon for you," she like Judah and Israel knew she had done wrong and was willing to accept the punishment.

**The point of this story:** though I was forced to inflict discomfort on my daughter, it did not affect my love for her or her love for me such was the faith of the faithful of the Old Testament when the LORD brought sorrow and grief upon them.

**NOTE:** this does not mean that every time someone is going through a period of hardship or trouble, or great suffering and sorrow it means they have sinned against God. Judah and Israel clearly knew they had rebelled against God and offended the LORD, many prophets had warned them to turn from their idols, pagan gods and corrupt ways. Not all suffering is a result of rebellion or some hidden sin. Our bodies are programmed to die and we live in a world where sin runs rampant which means trouble sorrow and sickness comes to the innocent and the wicked, the righteous and the sinner, the believer and the unbeliever. This is why Jesus said: -

- Lawlessness will increase and the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup>But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Matt. 24:12-13)

And why Paul said: -

- If we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us (2 Timothy 2:12).

Both Jesus and Paul are speaking to all Christians, endurance obviously implies hardships which means that even though a brother or sister in Christ is fully devoted, faithful and passionate toward the Lord it is not a guarantee that their life will be free of trouble and sorrow. But it is a guarantee that they will be saved to eternal life and reign with the Lord when he returns in glory.

**NOTICE:** though Israel prayed, God surrounded Himself with a cloud so that their prayers would not come before him. If God's people deliberately live a lifestyle that dishonours God and brings a bad testimony to the name of Jesus and violates Jesus command to, "love our neighbour as ourselves" meaning do-good to people and not harm (no sane person deliberately sets out to hurt themselves) their prayers will not pass through this cloud and be heard by God.

**The LORD has made Israel Scum and Garbage among the People.**

Lament. 3:45-47 ----- <sup>45</sup>You (the LORD) have made us scum and garbage among the peoples. <sup>46</sup>"All our enemies open their mouths against us; <sup>47</sup>panic and pitfall have come upon us, devastation and destruction.

In Deuteronomy chapter twenty-eight the entire nation of Israel entered into a covenant of blessing and cursing, of life and death with the LORD. Simply put the covenant stated if the people of Israel obeyed the LORD He would prosper everything they gave their hand to do and make them the head of all nations and not the tail, but if they acted wickedly destruction would come upon them and they would become the tail of nations and not the head.

Sadly Israel did not do right and took the corrupt and wicked path and are now reaping the consequences of the covenant they entered into with the LORD their God. For further information concerning the covenant see: Deuteronomy 28 in, Commentary OT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**My eyes Flow with Rivers of Tears because of the Destruction of My People.**

Lament. 3:48-54 ----- <sup>48</sup>my eyes flow with rivers of tears because of the destruction of the daughter of my people. <sup>49</sup>"My eyes will flow without ceasing, without respite, <sup>50</sup>until the LORD from heaven looks down and sees; <sup>51</sup>my eyes cause me grief at the fate of all the daughters of my city. <sup>52</sup>"I have been hunted like a bird by those who were my enemies without cause; <sup>53</sup>they flung me alive into the pit and cast stones on me; <sup>54</sup>water closed over my head; I said, 'I am lost.'

The writer is expressing his great compassion for the LORD'S people and by extension expressing Jerusalem's grief over seeing her inhabitants in such sorrow and the LORD'S enormous sorrow in seeing His people suffering. Much of the writers grief would stem from the fact that he knows that had Israel done right by God they would have been enormously blessed. Their land would have prospered their cattle and flocks multiplied, the people would be healthy and they would have been exalted above all nations on earth (see Deut 28).

**I have been hunted without cause:** means Israel and Judah did not invade or attack Assyria or Babylon. Though it was the LORD who brought Assyria and Babylon against Judah and Israel fulfilling His word of blessing and cursing that Israel agreed to in the covenant they made with God at Mount Sinai (see Deuteronomy 28). Assyria attacked the Northern kingdom of Israel (the ten tribes) in the land of Samaria and Babylon attacked Jerusalem (the two tribes) for their own gain and not because Israel came up against them.

**You have seen my Enemies taunts, against me O LORD; Judge my Cause.**

Lament. 3:55-66 ----- <sup>55</sup>"I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit; <sup>56</sup>you heard my plea, 'Do not close your ear to my cry for help!' <sup>57</sup>You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!' <sup>58</sup>"You have taken up my cause, O LORD; you have redeemed my life. <sup>59</sup>You have seen the wrong done to me, O LORD; judge my cause. <sup>60</sup>You have seen all their vengeance, all their plots against me. <sup>61</sup>"You have heard their taunts, O LORD, all their plots against me. <sup>62</sup>The lips and thoughts of my assailants are against me all the day long. <sup>63</sup>Behold their sitting and their rising; I am the object of their taunts. <sup>64</sup>"You will repay them (Judah and Israel's enemies), O LORD, according to the work of their hands. <sup>65</sup>You will give them dullness of heart (sorrow of heart in KJV); your curse will be on them. <sup>66</sup>You will pursue them in anger and destroy them from under your heavens, O LORD."

The writer knows the LORD has seen the enemies of Judah and Israel mocking God's people and their destructive thoughts toward them. He prays God will give Israel's enemies sorrow and bring destruction upon them. This is exactly what did happen, God used the secular nations of Assyria and Babylon to firstly bring judgment upon His people and then turned and brought judgment upon the nations who treated His people with brutality and who mocked and scorned them.

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End.