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

Lamentations 5.

(2014)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Lamentations 5.

Topics.

- Slaves rule over God's people.
- The crown has fallen from our head; woe to us, for we have sinned.
- You, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations.
- The blessings and curses of the covenant.
- Overview of the history of Judah and Israel.

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.

Israel's Inheritance and Homes has been Turned over to Foreigners.

Lament. 5:1-6 ----- ¹Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us; look, and see our disgrace! ²Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to foreigners. ³We have become orphans, fatherless; our mothers are like widows. ⁴We must pay for the water we drink; the wood we get must be bought. ⁵Our pursuers are at our necks; we are weary; we are given no rest. ⁶We have given the hand to Egypt, and to Assyria, to get bread enough.

The city of Jerusalem and the people of Judah and Israel are in utter disgrace before all other nations, their city and the Temple of God is in total ruin, foreigners are living in their homes, mothers have lost their husbands, children are fatherless and they are labouring until they are exhausted for Egyptians and Assyrians to be able to pay for water, wood and bread.

Slaves Rule over God's People.

Lament. 5:7-10 ----- ⁷Our fathers sinned, and are no more; and we bear their iniquities. ⁸Slaves rule over us; there is none to deliver us from their hand. ⁹We get our bread at the peril of our lives, because of the sword in the wilderness. ¹⁰Our skin is hot as an oven with the burning heat of famine.

Israel has been destroyed as a nation, people who were once slaves rule over them they are starving and have to labour so long their skin is burning under the head of the sun.

They have become the tail to their enemies as the covenant they entered into with the LORD at Mount Sinai states they would if they turned from God and acted corruptly before Him.

The Crown has Fallen from our Head; Woe to us, for we have Sinned.

Lament. 5:11-18 ----- ¹¹Women are raped in Zion, young women in the towns of Judah. ¹²Princes are hung up by their hands; no respect is shown to the elders. ¹³Young men are compelled to grind at the mill, and boys stagger under loads of wood. ¹⁴The old men have left the city gate, the young men their music. ¹⁵The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning. ¹⁶The crown has fallen from our head; woe to us, for we have sinned! ¹⁷For this our heart has become sick, for these things our eyes have grown dim, ¹⁸for Mount Zion which lies desolate; jackals prowl over it.

Is it any wonder this is called the book of lamentations, Jewish women are raped in the city of Jerusalem and young women are raped in the towns of Judah, noble men are hung and everyone including children is overworked and oppressed all because they set their hearts diamond hard against the word of the LORD.

God sent prophet after prophet warning the people to turn from their rebellion, their idols and their pagan gods and forsake their wicked ways or the Day of the LORD, (also called the day of the LORD'S Judgment and a day of gloom and darkness) would come upon them. Sadly they did not listen to the prophets and the day of the LORD came upon them, thus they are now in this sad and tragic state.

You, O LORD, Reign Forever; Your Throne Endures to all Generations.

Lament. 5:19-22 ----- ¹⁹But you, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations. ²⁰Why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days? ²¹Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old— ²²unless you have utterly rejected us, and you remain exceedingly angry with us.

NOTICE: as tragic as their life is, God is still highly exalted, the people know they have sinned, and their one cry is that God will forgive and restore them. This is true faith, no matter what comes against it, what tragedy one suffers or what crisis comes the cry of the heart is always, "You, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations."

The LORD answered the prayer of Israel: Babylon invaded Jerusalem and took its inhabitants (Judah the two tribes) into captivity later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. Israel and Judah were under Babylonian rule for seventy years. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods.

While in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar. They went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) gave permission to Israel to return to Jerusalem.

Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to pagan gods again).

The following verses of Isaiah show that the LORD used Cyrus the king of Persia as his anointed shepherd to answer the prayer of Israel: -

- The LORD says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.' ----NOW GO TO CHAPTER 45 ---- ¹Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed (Isaiah 44:28) (Isaiah 45:1).

The LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing that the LORD had charged him to let His people go and build the LORD a House in Jerusalem.

(2 Chron. 36:22-23) (Ezra 1:1-2) (Ezra 5:13-17) (Ezra 6:3) (Ezra 6:14).

Cyrus God's anointed shepherd: the LORD calls Cyrus (the secular king of Persia) His anointed shepherd. Isaiah pictures the LORD holding Cyrus's right hand while Cyrus opens all doors that no man can shut and subdues all nations (Isaiah 44:28) (Isaiah 45:1).

The blessings and curses of the covenant: Israel entered into a covenant of blessing and cursing, of life and death with the LORD at Mount Sinai. Sadly they broke the covenant and the Judah and Israel's woes expressed by the writer of Lamentations are a result of God's people forsaking their covenant with the LORD. Following is a list of some of the blessings and curses contained in the covenant.

The blessings (Deut. 28:1-13) if Israel had kept the laws and statutes of the covenant God would have: -

- Blessed their children, their land, fields, farms, cities, towns and their cattle their flocks, their crops, their grain, their food and their travelling out of the city and when they returned to it.
- Blessed their barns so that they would have been full and everything they did would prosper.
- Set them high above all the nations of the earth and establish them as the head and not the tail of all nations.
- Caused their enemies to flee from them in terror and be defeated and destroyed by them.
- Made them a holy people for Himself and establish them as a nation called by His name and all nations would see it.
- Abundantly prospered their nation in everything they did so that would not only never have to borrow, but would also be able to lend to many nations.

The curses: (Deut. 28:16-57) if Israel broke the covenant they would suffer the following curses: -

- Whatever they put their hand to in in the city of Jerusalem or outside of it would come to nothing.
- They would have trouble giving birth and because of extreme hunger would eat the fruit of their womb and the flesh of their sons and daughters and not share it with their own family to survive intense famine.
- They would be struck with madness, blindness, confusion of mind and frustration in all that they did until they were utterly destroyed.
- Disease, fever, inflammation, fiery heat, boils, tumours, scabs which cannot be healed would come upon them. They would be reduced in number by all kinds sickness and death and there would be no-one to bury their dead bodies so they would become food for all birds and beasts.
- Their land would lack rain, the ground would be dry and locust, worms and crickets would eat the fruit of their trees and their crops. Their herds, flocks and grain would be consumed off by blight, pestilence and disease until they perish.
- They would be the tail and not the head of all nations and strangers would be exalted over them. Their enemies would slaughter their cattle and sheep and rape their wives and take their sons and daughters into captivity and show no

mercy to the young or the old. They would live in poverty and be oppressed and robbed continually.

- They would be defeated in battle and their towns and cities invaded. Their enemies would lead them away to a foreign nation and many would be scattered amongst the surrounding towns, cities and villages. They would become a disgrace before all nations and languish in hunger and thirst.
- Their heart will be fearful and they will be oppressed by their enemies and sold as male and female slaves to serve nations who worship other gods. Foreigners and strangers will possess their houses and live in them and eat their crops.

Overview of the History of Judah and Israel.

Following is a brief history of how God brought about the curses of the covenant upon Israel and Judah. Israel set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets they rebelled against the LORD they turned to other gods and entered into gross sin so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring the curses of the covenant upon them.

The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem and pillaged the temple and took the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) into captivity later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. Israel and Judah were under Babylonian rule for seventy years. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods. During these seventy years foreigners took possession of their homes, wild animals multiplied in their farm lands and they were scattered amongst nations who worshipped pagan gods.

Now here is the good news: while in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again)

Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a time of prosperity and peace followed

Sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory: -

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

NOTE: the principle that applied to Israel does not apply to New Testament Christians. Those who belong to Christ are not under the Old Testament law and neither have they entered into a legally binding covenant of blessing and cursing. New Testament Christians are saved by a Gospel of grace and their salvation is not earned by law or self-effort it is a free gift from God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace.

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