

# The Message of the Old Testament A Book-by-Book Study

## Lamentations

### Lamentations: Background and Introduction

The Northern kingdom fell to its enemies in 722 BC. Years later (134 to be exact) in 588 BC, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon laid siege to \_\_\_\_\_, the capital of the southern kingdom. The siege lasted a year and a half.

When the Babylonians succeeded in breaching the Jerusalem wall, they destroyed everything---the \_\_\_\_\_, the palace, the walls, and Jerusalem itself. They took \_\_\_\_\_ with them back to Babylon and left only the poor in the land.

2 Kings 25:1-4a---

And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem and laid siege to it. And they built siegeworks all around it. So the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, and the Chaldeans were around the city.

2 Kings 25:8-12---

In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. And he burned the house of the Lord and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. And the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, together with the rest of the multitude, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile. But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen.

This is the background of the writing of the book of Lamentations. The book consists of 5 poems which lament the deplorable desolation resulting from the Babylonian siege and devastation.

Authorship is not a matter of certainty. The Hebrew text does not name the author. Second Kings 35:25 indicates that Jeremiah wrote a lament for Josiah. And significant ancient translations of the Hebrew ascribe the book to him. Whether it was Jeremiah or someone else, the main thing is that the people of God accepted it as Holy Scripture.

### Lamentations: Outline

- I. Afflicted and Forsaken (1)
- II. Enmity with God (2)
- III. Hope Amidst Despair (3)
- IV. Chastised Greater than Sodom (4)
- V. Pleading for Restoration (5)

### The Message of the Song of Solomon Afflicted and Forsaken

1:1---She sits lonely

1:2---She weeps bitterly

2

1:3---She has gone into exile

1:4---Sad streets

1:5---Her foes rule

1:6---Her majesty is gone

1:7---All she has are memories

1:10--Her treasures have been ravished

1:12—Overcome with sorrow

1:16---

1:18—The Reason for the Suffering

1:20---

Enmity with God

2:1-3

2:4-7

2:7-8

Puts the speaker in utter anguish---2:11

What He purposed--2:17

The anger of the Lord--2:22

Hope Amidst Despair  
Despair---3:1-6

Despair---3:16-18

Hope---3:19-21

Hope---3:22-24

Hope---3:25-30

Hope---3:31-33

Hope---3:49-51

Hope---3:52-57

Chastised Greater than Sodom  
4:4-6—the helpless and the mighty

4:13-16---prophets, priests, and elders

4:22---punishment accomplished

## Pleading for Restoration

5:1-3---Remember

5:11-15---Remember

5:19-21---Restore

Paul House comments,

The people “know that restoration will not occur in a moment, so their opportunity for revival and rebuilding rest in a God who transcends time. Only a God whose kingdom is not dependent on material circumstances and whose nature is not bounded by time can give those who have nothing and are finite any sense of comfort. These worshipers also realize that unless the \_\_\_\_ renews them they will \_\_\_\_\_ rise from the ashes. If God casts them off forever they have no hope. But the presence of this book in the canon and their understanding of God’s character indicate that they have been \_\_\_\_\_. Yahweh cannot judge the \_\_\_\_\_, for it is not in His nature to do so. God would not be God if sin were not punished, but neither would God be God if forgiveness were not extended.” (House, Old Testament Theology, 489)

The message of the book of Lamentations derives from its focus on what was Israel’s most \_\_\_\_\_ memory. Tracing the history of this people, we observe that God’s grace was upon them in great measure. He came to them in Egypt and delivered them from oppression and brought them to Himself. Gave them His \_\_\_\_\_. Brought them to a rich and prosperous land already plowed and planted. Gave them a king for which they asked. Visited them with peace and \_\_\_\_\_. Gave them a glorious capital city whose center was a glorious temple in which to worship him. But relentlessly they \_\_\_\_\_, from their wilderness wanderings forward. God warned them when he made his covenant of the repercussions for their disobedience. God sent them the prophets to warn them. Yet they persisted in rejecting him. The result is a devastated temple, devastated homes, devastated roads, and demolished walls, devoid of the presence and power of God. The message of Lamentations is that this is the result of human sin, the result of rejecting God. God is patient, but God is holy. Persistent and determined rejection of the covenant God will incite his wrath.

But so long as there is breath for repentance, there is hope for restoration. So, when you are laying there in your squalor and heart ache and remorse, He is still there in mercy and faithfulness.

He does not delight in expressing His wrath, but his holiness compels him. He will judge. And yet every single day is a manifestation of his mercy. Therefore, for Israel there remains \_\_\_\_\_.

## Esther

### Background and Introduction

#### Authorship

No information about authorship and date about which we can be certain

#### Setting

After time of captivity

After time of return of 2 waves of captives to Jerusalem

Susa, the capital of the Persian empire

During reign of King Xerxes 486-465 BC

#### Outline

- I. Esther Rises to Prominence (1-2)
- II. Mordecai Refuses to Bow (3)
- III. Esther Determines to Act (4)
- IV. Esther Appears Before the King (5)
- V. Esther Saves the Jews (6-9:1-19)
- VI. Feast of Purim Is Established (9:20-32)
- VII. Mordecai is Honored (10)

## The Message of the Book

### Esther Rises to Prominence

1:15-19

2:1-4

2:5-8

2:15-17

2:21-23

### Mordecai Refuses to Bow

3:1-2

3:5-6

Haman brought the matter before Ahasuerus and suggested that an edict be crafted calling for the destruction of the Jews. And the King consented giving Haman his signet ring. The edict was written and dispersed throughout the land.

3:13

### Esther Determines to Act

Mordecai learned what had been done and became distraught. He got word to the queen and urged her to beg the favor of the king and plead on behalf of the people.

Esther's concern, however, was that going to the king was against the law. It meant risking her life. She had not been called by the king for 30 days, and she would be put to death unless the king would hold out his scepter to her. But this was her word to Mordecai:

"Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish." (4:16)

### Esther Appears Before the King

5:1-3

The queen invited the king and Haman to a banquet just for them at which time she would tell him her request. After they had eaten, the king sought to know the queen's wish. She asked him to come to another banquet the next day at which time she would reveal her request.

Exiting the palace, Haman saw Mordecai, who did not bow to him. He was infuriated afresh and built a gallows on which to urge the king to hang Mordecai the next day.

### Esther Saves the Jews

That night the king could not sleep and asked that the king's chronicles be read to him. In the reading they came across how Mordecai's intervention had protected the life of the king, and King Ahasuerus determined that Mordecai must be honored. Haman had come into the court to speak with the king about hanging Mordecai but arrived just in time for the king to ask in what way he might honor a deserving man. Haman knew that someone must be him.

At the second banquet, Esther revealed her request. She asked for her life and the life of her people who had been sold to be destroyed. Who did this, the king demanded. Haman. The king had Haman hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai. The king gave his signet ring to Mordecai. And the king granted that the Jews could defend themselves and destroy their enemies, anyone who would attack them. The Jews destroyed their enemies.

Feast of Purim Is Established  
9:20-22

Mordecai is Honored  
10:2-3

### The Message of Esther

Paul House points out

Lamentations ends with the plea that God will restore fallen Israel, unless the Lord has “utterly rejected” the people (5:22). How God will treat the chosen nation now that it has been scattered to other lands is a vital issue. Will God still redeem, sustain, and heal? Does Yahweh have saving power regardless of where the people may be driven? Is the Lord still interested in the people, given the fact that their sins led to the forfeiture of the land in the first place? (House, Old Testament Theology, 490)

Esther illustrates that God protects the exiles. He is not done with them.

What may be called coincidences, are rather marks of divine \_\_\_\_\_, of God’s superintending the events of Esther’s life and the Jews’ preservation.

Vashti’s Demise

An Orphan Girl

Mordecai’s Discovery (right place right time)

Esther’s Bold Risk

Haman’s Gallows

The King’s Sleepless Night

God’s providential preservation of the Jews says in the context of the canon, God has not \_\_\_\_\_ his people.